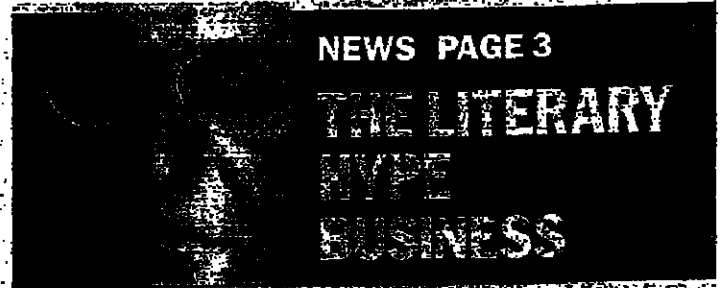




INSIDE THE TABLOID
NETWORK+
THE MAN WHO'S
AFTER APPLE



INSIDE THE TABLOID
**INFERTILITY: WHAT
EVERY WOMAN
SHOULD KNOW**



NEWS PAGE 3
**THE LITERARY
TYPE
BUSINESS**

The Tory party gives up

Anthony Bevis
and Fran Abrams

The Conservative election campaign began to fray at the edges yesterday, with despair setting in, public displays of anger and the battle increasingly focused on a one-man fight being waged by John Major.

With only three days before polling day and all the polls suggesting a three-figure Labour majority, the Conservatives held no press conference, the party's big hitters were largely silent, and Brian Mawhinney, the chairman, sent out a message to constituencies saying there was still time left to win over "millions" of undecided voters.

That was not the message given by voters to *Independent* reporters yesterday. On visits to six marginal Tory constituencies, they found a distinct hardening of Labour support. In Stevenage, which is 37th on Labour's target list and a seat the party must win to have any hope of forming a government, many former Conservatives said they would vote Labour and praised a strong campaign by the party's candidate, Barbara Follett.

In Redditch, which is 44th on the Labour list and where a win would still not give the party an overall Commons majority on a uniform national swing, several unhappy Conservative voters in a panel set up by *The Independent* have now swung to Labour, after vacillating throughout the campaign.

Even more optimistic for Labour, both Cleethorpes, which could give Labour a majority of more than 30, and Watford, which could mean a 50-plus majority, look likely to fall to Labour. The party also seems set to retain the seat of Tamworth, formerly South East

Staffordshire, which it won in a by-election last year.

Mr Blair said he took nothing for granted and deplored talk of landslides. Labour is keeping tight wraps round preparations for election night. However, the Royal Festival Hall has been booked for a massive party for workers and volunteers, with over 1,000

... but no one's told John Major



The Prime Minister on the stump yesterday

expected guests. Mr Blair is due to arrive there from his Sedgefield constituency at around 3.30am on Friday, by which time Labour might be assured of a majority government.

Mr Major last night completed a whistle-stop tour of the United Kingdom with an impromptu speech on Abingdon

Green, opposite the Commons, where he warned there were "seventy-two hours left to save the Union" from Labour policies on devolution and Europe.

The enthusiasm of the audience for his performance, staged to coincide with 6pm news bulletins, was explained by the fact that at least 90 of them were counted by *The Independent* returning to Conservative Central Office after it ended.

The Prime Minister's appearance at Westminster meant he could have appeared on the ITV 500 programme last night - Michael Heseltine stood in for him - and prompted Labour charges that he had "chickened out" of appearing before an audience of "real people".

When the charge was put to the Deputy Prime Minister he lost his temper in the television studio. Sue Lawley, hosting the programme, said that although Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown had made their appointments to appear, Mr Major had pulled out just a few days beforehand.

Mr Heseltine protested that Mr Major was in Northern Ireland and could not have announced the visit for security reasons. Hearing a member of the audience shout, "chicken!" Mr Heseltine said: "If you think the Prime Minister going to Northern Ireland is chicken, then you haven't the faintest idea what a brave and courageous man is about."

But the Tories were dogged during the day by what Mr Mawhinney told constituency chairmen amounted to no more than "groundless title-tattle" about disarray in Conservative Central Office and a leadership contest already running for the replacement of Mr Major.

Both Mr Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the



Going up in smoke: Kenneth Clarke in pensive mood yesterday at Blackpool after fending off questions on a leadership contest. Photograph: Tom Pileston

Exchequer, were asked during the day about their intentions for a leadership contest.

Pursued by the question in Blackpool, Mr Clarke said: "What you are talking about is not going to happen if we get it

right on Thursday." Ladbrokes reported heavy betting on Mr Heseltine as next leader, making him 7-2 co-favourite with Michael Portillo and Michael Howard. Peter Mandelson, Labour's campaign manager, said:

"Among the settling of scores and the interminable warfare, there's an awful lot of limbering up and auditions being carried out by would-be leadership challengers." The Liberal Democrat spokesman, Menzies

Campbell, told BBC radio's *World at One* programme: "If the Conservative Party embarks upon the kind of anti-European course to which it appears to be set, then I think there will be a substantial number of Conser-

vative MPs of the One Nation variety who will find the issue of Europe too much for them, and will certainly be looking round to find another place, another party perhaps to which they should add their support."

Strange case of the diamond dealer and the £20,000 gifts

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

A millionaire diamond dealer who gave more than £20,000 to John Major's Conservative constituency association was later invited to go on a prestigious trade mission to Israel and Jordan with the Prime Minister.

According to correspondence leaked to *The Independent*, Willie Nagel, who also owned a lobbying company called Punchlines, attempted to interest Mr Major in an unmanned aircraft developed by Israel, even though there was an arms embargo for Israeli equipment at the time. Mr Nagel also lobbied him on a number of other matters before going on the trip in March 1995.

The revelations will reopen questions about Tory links with big business and the party's fundraising efforts which are a closely-guarded secret.

Mr Nagel is one of only five official diamond brokers for De Beers, the South African

mining conglomerate, and claims to have extensive business connections throughout the European Union, Eastern Europe, Israel and the USA.

He was introduced in the early 1990s to Peter Brown, Mr Major's constituency agent, by Benjamin Perl, a friend of Mr Major's. Mr Perl runs a picture frame factory in the Prime Minister's Huntingdon constituency, but Mr Nagel has no connection with the constituency.

Mr Brown was taken to Wimbledon and sent various gifts including a magnum of champagne. They also met for lunch. According to a letter from Mr Brown, Mr Nagel then offered sponsorship of £10,000 for two local Tory party events following the 1992 election victory.

The subsequent invoice is for "advertising in brochures for at least two major functions in the year 1992 and to include regular political briefings and new bulletins". Such a formulation means that the donations do not have to be revealed as political

contributions. At another lunch, Mr Nagel talked with Mr Brown about the Pioneer, an unmanned aircraft project by Israel Aircraft Industries.

He then wrote to Mr Major passing on the material and saying: "I'm not suggesting that any action could be taken upon this, but I wonder whether you might pass the information on to any department concerned with such equipment."

However, at the time - November 1992 - there was an arms embargo for equipment from Israel. After the embargo was lifted in May 1994, the Ministry of Defence did consider the Pioneer as an alternative to the Phoenix project which had been delayed by technical problems.

A team of RAF officers was sent to Israel in 1995, but in October 1996 the MoD decided to stick with the Phoenix.

Mr Nagel also met Norma Major, who paid a visit to his Holborn office where she had lunch with his family and examined some of his diamonds.

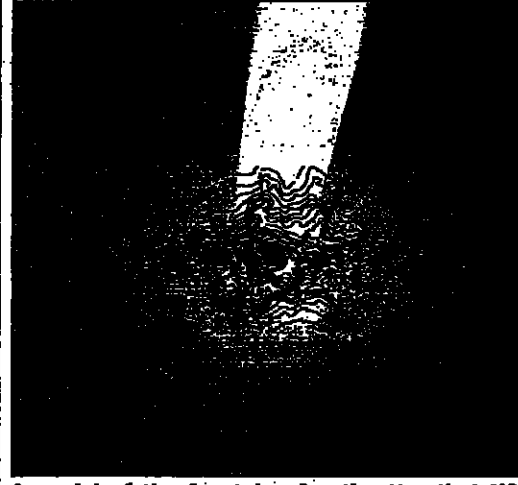
However, his efforts to befriend Mr Major appear to have become unwelcome and a memo from Mr Brown to Mr Major in August 1994 raises the problem of how to deal with the "persistence" of Mr Nagel, who at one point is accused of being a "telephone trespasser" because he called the Prime Minister at home.

He had tried to alert Mr Major to the fact that the new managing director of Marks & Spencer, Andrew Stone, had tried to arrange a private lunch between himself and Tony Blair.

However, relations appeared to have been repaired because Mr Major invited Mr Nagel to go on the trade mission to Israel in March 1995.

Mr Nagel did not return *The Independent's* calls and last night.

A spokesman for Conservative Central Office said: "I very much doubt the Prime Minister knew about who was going on the trip. The list was put together by the DTI and No 10."



A model of the fountain of antimatter that US scientists have found pouring out of the Milky Way

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

When antimatter and matter meet, they annihilate each other utterly in a blaze of light. Now it seems the same can happen when American astronomers' claims reach the ears of rivals on this side of the Atlantic after a brief burst, the two cancel each other out.

Yesterday, a team from the US space agency announced that they had found a "fountain of antimatter" pouring out of the centre of our galaxy, the Milky Way. According to the team, the "fountain" consisted of positrons - positively-charged electrons, the "antiparticle" of the standard electron - which might be produced by the super-

massive black hole known to lurk at the galaxy's middle, 25,000 light years away.

When a positron meets an electron, the two particles destroy each other and give off a burst of gamma rays. The Nasa work followed a detailed mapping effort aimed at the source of gamma rays in the centre of the galaxy.

"The origin of this new and unexpected source of antimatter is a mystery," said William Purcell, assistant professor of physics and astronomy at Northwestern University.

Which sounded fine; except that Sir Martin Rees, the British Astronomer Royal, reckoned that, strictly speaking, not only was this not antimatter, but it wasn't a mystery where it came from.

"I don't think it's wildly exciting," Sir Martin said yesterday. "They haven't actually found evidence of antiprotons [the antimatter equivalent of the proton] - just positrons. They're everywhere: they can be produced by the decay of radioactive elements in the leftovers of a supernova. What they really haven't found is antimatter, because there aren't any antiprotons."

If there were large amounts of antimatter atoms in our galaxy it would be very surprising, because of its readiness to react with - and destroy - normal matter. The vast majority of the universe is believed to consist of normal matter, though scientists believe that there may be whole galaxies consisting entirely of antimatter. So far, though, Nasa has not found any.

Astronomers apply mind over matter in dispute over antimatter

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QUICKLY	
Zaire pressure	
The United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, yesterday turned up the pressure on the leader of the rebel movement in Zaire, Laurent Kabila, to co-operate in repatriating tens of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees believed lost in the east of the country in conditions of appalling exhaustion and deprivation.	
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Only the LIBERAL DEMOCRATS say what Britain needs, what it will cost and where the money will come from.

Invest in Education - cutting class sizes, giving schools more books and equipment and giving all 3 and 4 year olds quality nursery education. The investment of £2 billion per year will be paid for by putting an extra penny in the pound on income tax. Together with our other tax proposals, this will mean a net increase of 45p per week to the average tax payer.

Safeguard our NHS - cutting waiting lists,

employing more doctors and nurses, restoring free eye tests and dental check ups. The cost of £550 million per year will be paid for by adding 5p to a packet of cigarettes and closing tax loopholes.

Tackle crime - putting 3,000 more police on the beat. The cost of £60 million will be paid for by cutting wasteful Government spending on advertising and management consultants.

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

John 201520

significant shorts

BA awaits verdict on terror threat protest

A French court will rule today whether British Airways was within its rights to refuse, for security reasons to operate check-in desks at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport next to those of the Algerian national airline.

BA operations at the main French airport have been severely disrupted since Saturday because the airline has closed its check-in desks during the busiest part of the day. Passengers with more than hand luggage have been advised by BA to switch to other airlines, or take the train. Alternatively, BA has been inviting them to fly without their luggage, which is delivered to their homes the next day.

Following a number of bomb attacks in France connected to the Algerian civil war, British Airways claims that the presence of Air Algerie in the neighbouring check-in desks greatly increases the threat of its passengers or staff being injured in a terrorist attack. The Algerian air line resumed flights from Charles de Gaulle airport on Friday, after a two year break. **John Lichfield - Paris**

BBC settles Barclay libel battle

The BBC has settled a long-running legal battle with the reclusive newspaper and property millionaire David and Frederick Barclay.

The BBC and *Observer* journalist John Sweeney apologised in the High Court yesterday to the brothers - owners of the *Scotsman* and *European* newspapers and the Ritz hotel - and paid just under £15,000 to the brothers' favourite charity for a libel committed on BBC Radio Guernsey.

The brothers have pursued the BBC and Mr Sweeney, who presented the programme about them, through the French courts for both libel and breach of privacy as well as complaining to the Broadcasting Standards Council in the UK. The apology and payment is in settlement of both UK and French legal actions, and the broadcasting standards complaint, which has only so far been heard in part, will be dropped by the brothers. **Paul McCann**

Singer fined over street fracas

Rap and soul singer Mark Morrison was yesterday fined £750 for threatening behaviour and told that with "fame comes a responsibility to behave". Leicester magistrates were told that the 24-year-old singer - who has had several Top 10 hits, including "Return of the Mack" - was



arrested after an early morning fracas in the city centre during the Easter weekend. Morrison, (left) of Notting Hill, west London, was told by the chairman of the bench: "This is not the first time and it is quite clear that if you continue then there is a likelihood that you will ruin your career and your own future. With fame comes a responsibility to behave in a proper manner, not only for yourself but for those youngsters who look up to you."

Digital radio plans unveiled

Britain will receive over 30 digital radio services by 1999 after the Radio Authority confirmed yesterday that it will start advertising 20 digital commercial licences next spring.

In a letter to the Commercial Radio Companies Association, the authority has promised a "fast-track" approach to bring dozens of new digital services on-air at the same time. Home-owners will need digital radios to receive the stations which will also carry small "TV" screens for text and data services - so far only prototype digital receivers are available but commercially priced digital radios will be launched later this year. Britain's three national commercial stations, Virgin, Talk and Classic FM, will all be offered guaranteed places on the radio multiplex. The BBC has been digitally broadcasting its five national stations and dedicated parliament and sports services since 1995. **Paul McCann**

Care costs ruling upheld

A council's right to sell a person's home in order to claw back nursing home fees was upheld in the High Court yesterday.

Despite the fact that David Harcombe had returned from Australia to care for his 84-year-old mother, the judge ruled that councils had a wide discretion to impose such charges "to ensure residents with assets are not maintained at public expense". Mrs Harcombe had wanted to leave her house to her children, including Mr Harcombe who lives there, but now much of the money from its sale will have to pay off the residential home fees. Local authorities must disregard the value of a property where a spouse or a relative who is either under 16, over 60 or disabled lives. But they are allowed to use their discretion in other cases. **Glenda Cooper**

Why gardeners can discount drought

A water company is offering gardeners cash discounts on drought-resistant plants in a bid to save resources this summer. Severn Trent Water is linking up with 60 garden centres in the Midlands to offer a 10 per cent discount throughout the season. Gardeners will be able to purchase lavender, wallflowers and salvias as well as watering cans, water butts and compost bins at special prices.

people



Money talks: Deborah Banks, whose case could help 200 million women (Photograph: KNP)

Check-out worker begins mother of all pay battles

Deborah Banks began a battle yesterday which could cost employers millions of pounds and affect up to two million British women who work in low-paid and part-time jobs.

The 25-year-old former supermarket check-out worker has gone to an industrial tribunal in pursuit of a claim for £700 missed maternity pay. She is pursuing her claim against Tesco and Peter Lilley, the Secretary of State for Social Security, after she was denied the money because her salary was £1 too low.

If her case is successful it could lead to a change in the law, which would force employers to pay millions in extra maternity pay for women whose salaries are below the level necessary to require national insurance contributions. Even if the case is not won at the tribunal, the charity Maternity Alliance, which is backing Mrs Banks, has said it will take the fight through the appeal courts and on to the European Court.

Mrs Banks used to work 15 hours a week for her local Tesco in Gillingham, Kent, and earned £55.93, just £1 less on average than the low pay limit. She left the store on maternity leave in December 1994 when she was pregnant with her second child but she had not earned enough to qualify for payment of Statutory Maternity Pay, despite having worked since 1988.

She said yesterday that she wanted to prevent other women being caught in a low-pay trap. "I am not doing this for me. I am doing it for the thousands of women out there who do not get maternity pay because they do not earn enough." Apart from losing maternity pay, Mrs Banks was also ineligible for income support because her husband was in full-time employment. The legal action is being brought under the Equal Pay Act, which is supposed to guarantee equal rights for women working in the same jobs as men. Campaigners say the vast majority of the approximately 50 per cent of Tesco's employees who are not earning enough to pay national insurance contributions are women. **Simon Reeve**

'English Patient' in the best of health

Hot on the heels of his triumph at the Oscars, film director Anthony Minghella is set to step back into the limelight at tonight's Bafta awards ceremony with *The English Patient* tipped to sweep all before it.

The film - which won nine Oscars - received a record 13 Bafta nominations and has already garnered three of a possible seven awards in the craft section a few weeks ago, for music, cinematography and editing. The six remaining nominations are for best film, direction, adapted screenplay, leading actor and actress and supporting actress.

Many of the film categories at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards offer the chance of a consolation prize to those talents overlooked in Hollywood like *English Patient* star Kristin Scott Thomas (pictured), Hollywood veteran Lauren Bacall and Mike Leigh's *Secrets And Lies*, which received no Oscars despite five nominations.

The ceremony at the Royal Albert Hall, highlight of Britain's showbusiness awards calendar, also offers recognition of the best



in television. Top programmes in the running for the television prizes include *Only Fools And Horses* and *Hillsborough*.

The Mrs Merton Show has two nominations and *Rory Bremner, Who Else?* has three, as does acclaimed BBC2 drama *Our Friends In The North*.

News, sport, factual and talk shows also get their chance of awards.

The ceremony - which will be attended by the Princess Royal, president of Bafta - will be hosted by Lenny Henry and screened on BBC1 at 10pm.

Boy with one arm wins professional football signing

A teenager born with one arm is set for a career in professional football after signing for his local club.

Chris Perrior, 15, formally joined Second Division Walsall FC when he signed schoolboy forms in front of almost 6,000 fans before Saturday's home game against Brentford.

The midfielder was invited to join the Saddlers school of excellence after scouts spotted him playing for the Walsall Schools representative side.

Chris, of Bechdale, Walsall, who was born with his right arm finishing just below the elbow, said: "All the kids I play against just treat me as normal, and it has never caused me a problem."

Walsall's liaison officer, Bill Jones, said: "He's a very good player - we wouldn't have taken him on unless we thought he had a chance of making it."

"Although he has this disability, he does everything for himself and he's not embarrassed by his disability at all. He's very quick, gets good crosses in and he can also defend."

briefing

MEDIA

C5 gets a poor reception from target audience

More than a third of Channel 5's target audience has been disappointed by the new channel's programmes, and almost 40 per cent think they are the worst shown on British terrestrial television.

Among 15- to 24-year-olds - Channel 5's core target audience - 35 per cent believe the channel is worse than they expected and 38 per cent think it is the worst terrestrial channel on air. Among the population as a whole, 21 per cent think C5 shows the poorest programmes of any broadcaster, according to a survey of 500 people for CIA MediaLab, the media analysts.

Part of the channel's problem continues to be poor reception. The survey found that only 43 per cent of respondents get a moderate or good picture while 53 per cent say they get either a poor picture or no picture at all. **Paul McCann**

CRIME

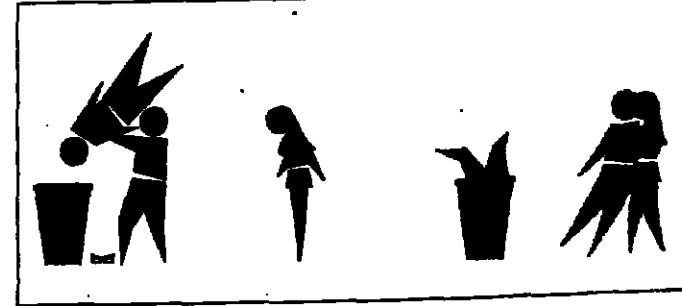
Nigerians top UK's fraud league

West African criminals are responsible for almost half of all frauds carried out in the United Kingdom, claims a police report.

The National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) estimates that Nigerians and Ghanaians swindle £3.5bn from individuals, businesses and the Government, out of annual frauds totalling £8bn. West African frauds are a "significant concern" for police forces and governments around the world, an NCIS spokeswoman said. Among the swindles are: offering non-existent cargo at a discount, with payment up-front (one man lost £250,000); multiple claims for welfare benefits, using up to 25 false names and addresses; and passing off "damaged" banknotes which prove to be fakes.

ENVIRONMENT

Putting the love into litterbug



Tidyman, the ubiquitous 'Keep Britain Tidy' logo on packaging and litter bins, is getting a love life and an aggressive personality in a new advertising campaign aimed at Britain's messiest group - teenage boys.

In the series of advertisements, by the Poulter agency, an animated Tidyman will appear on television and cinema screens grabbing a silhouette boy who drops rubbish, and dumping him in a litter bin. Tidyman then makes off with the messy silhouette's girlfriend, to the line: "Use a bin. It beats getting your bird nicked by a logo."

The Tidy Britain Group, the charity behind Tidyman, found that, in 1995, 661 out of 723 littering offences recorded by the police were committed by males, most of whom were teenagers.

CONSUMER TRENDS

Shoppers take to streets at night

In less than a decade nearly a third of trips to the doctor, hairdresser or dentist will be made in the evening, according to a new report.

And, by the year 2005, 30 per cent of our "personal-business travel" - visits to places such as the dry-cleaners - will take place between 5pm and 10pm, compared with 17.4 per cent today. In 1985 to 1986, 6.4 per cent of shopping trips took place between 6 and 10pm. By last year it had increased to 9 per cent and is expected to be 15 per cent by 2006. "Convenience is king," said Leon Kreitzman of the Future Foundation, the analysts who produced the interim findings of the 24 Hour Society report for BT and First Direct. "A real demand for the 24-hour society is growing." **Glenda Cooper**

TRANSPORT

Sting in the tailback over new jobs

An expected "explosion" of 150,000 new jobs in London in the run-up to the millennium will pose a serious challenge to the capital's transport system, a new report warned yesterday.

The work would be created in information technology, telecommunications, finance and business services, said the London Chamber of Commerce study. "These figures are wonderful news, but there is a sting in the tail," Simon Sperry, chief executive of the organisation, said. "By the year 2000, London Underground will be near breaking point... and London's roads will be approaching gridlock. This is insanity."

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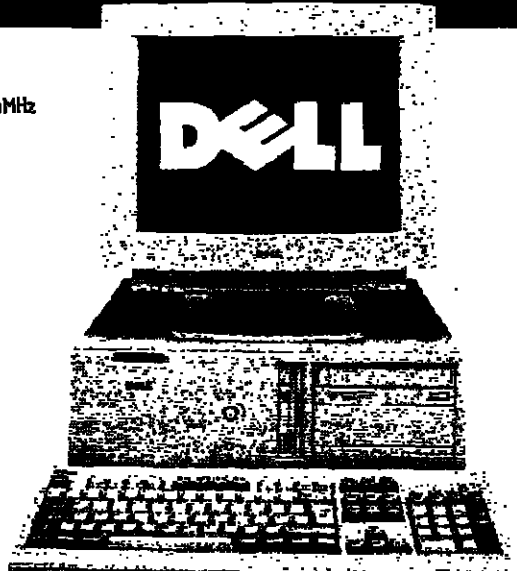


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مكتبة من الأصول

Boy George, the love of his life and a night dressed as Boadicea

Clare Garner

Boy George, the DJ and former singer in Culture Club, said yesterday that Kirk Brandon, the frontman of Spear of Destiny and Theatre of Hate, had been "the great love" of his life in the early Eighties.

George told the High Court that he and Brandon had shared a bed more than 100 times and, although they never had intercourse, had enjoyed mutual masturbation and other sexual activities.

Brandon, 40, from East Dulwich, south London, who is now married with a baby daughter admits sharing a bed with

George "once in a while", but denies that any homosexual activity took place.

He is suing George in his real name of George O'Dowd, the book publishers Sidgwick and Jackson, Virgin Records and the music publishers EMI Virgin Music for malicious falsehood over his 1995 autobiography, *Take It Like A Man*, and a song entitled *Unfinished Business*.

Yesterday he accused Brandon of being homophobic in bringing the court action. "I said in my book that you were very talented and I loved you," he

said. "Where is the damage in that? I am much more brutal about myself in the book than anybody else."

Challenged that he was lying about their sexual relationship and had not produced any evidence to substantiate it, he continued: "I've never seen my father and mother having sex, but I know they did because I'm here. But I've never seen them have sex so I can't prove it. I've got plenty of friends and relatives I've never seen copulating but it doesn't mean they haven't had sex."

Their relationship, he added, had been obvious to everybody. "We were inseparable."

he said. "We held hands in public. At the time I was walking around in high-heeled shoes and very outrageous clothes. I was very well-known in London, being around me was obvious to everybody."

George described how the relationship faltered on one of his more colourful days. Brandon's sister was up from Devon. George was dressed as Boadicea at a gig. "It's right to say we didn't really hit it off," he said.

Earlier yesterday, a number of witnesses said they had seen the two men in bed together or behaving affectionately in public and presumed they were hav-

ing a relationship. At one stage in the hearing the pair argued in court over which of them was obsessed with the other. George denied that he was obsessed with Brandon.

"You know we had a relationship and I think the obsession is more on your part than mine. If you thought I was insane, why take this action? Why not just shrug and say: 'He's mad'?"

George did, however, admit that he was sad when Brandon got married two years ago. "I don't know why, but that's why I wrote the song *Unfinished Business*. I was expressing my true feelings about Kirk.

"He has denied our relationship for 20 years. If there was no relationship, then why are we in court 20 years later fighting about it?"

When asked by Brandon whether he considered himself "a self-publicising homosexual", George replied: "I would say I am proud of my sexual orientation. I don't think it's anything to be ashamed of - do you?"

Brandon answered that he was not ashamed of his sexual orientation "at all".

"My wife is quite happy with me. My daughter is quite happy with me. That's quite good enough for me," he said.

The hearing continues.

Kirk Brandon: denies any homosexual activity

Welcome to the
Apes' tea party;
the literary
hype season
starts here

Be you simian or sapien,
you will be welcome at the launch of

Great Apes

On the Members Lawn at London Zoo
Tuesday 29th April. 6.30pm to 8.30pm
(Private Functions Gate, Outer Circle,
Regents Park)

Will Self (right) and the invitation (above) to tonight's launch party. Photomontage: Mark Hayman

Boyd Tonkin
Literary Editor

Forget Ascot and Henley. The alternative season begins this evening on the lawn at London Zoo. Already the object of a media frenzy after his exploits on the PM's jet, Will Self will be there to launch his second novel - the aptly-titled *Great Apes* - in front of the book world's higher primates.

Just to show that there really is no such thing as bad publicity, Self's publishers have despatched press cuttings about his heroin confessions to reviewers along with copies of the book. But these days, publishers think that warm reviews alone won't make a loud enough noise in the literary menagerie.

Even without Self's notoriety, the party in such a venue would fire the opening shots in a war for media attention that grows more savage every year.

But purchased hype can backfire badly. Last year's teaser campaign for the paperback of Martin Amis's *The Information*

fell flat: punters failed to spot the book behind an enigmatic logo that sprouted on bus shelters. So publishers hope that their favoured novels can not only scale the charts after their PR blitzes – at a cost that can top £100,000 – but also contend for a major fiction award.

This year, Picador's hopes for a Booker Prize victory are focused on John Banville. The Irish novelist and literary editor of the *Irish Times* has slipped into the mainstream with *The Untouchable* – his fictionalised life of the Fourth Man, Sir Anthony Blunt.

Prize success alone can still sell books in vast quantities. In 1996, Kate Atkinson's triumph in the Whitbread Awards for *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* helped to shift nearly 400,000 copies of a debut novel by a formerly unknown writer. This week, it still features in the paperback Top 40.

Meanwhile, awards for fiction grow ever more numerous and lucrative. The £30,000 Orange Prize for women's fiction — won

last year by Helen Dunmore — has survived quarrels over separatism and will release a second shortlist on 7 May.

Soon after will come news of the ultimate literary blockbuster. The management company IMPAC sponsors an international award for fiction

international award for fiction worth £100,000 to the winner. Its first recipient was David Malouf, for *Remembering Babylon*. This year's contenders include *Morvern Callar*, a much-loved novel of the Ibiza rave scene by the Scottish writer Alan Warn-

Yet the Booker, now almost 30 years old, keeps a cachet that survives the larger sums of-

fered by its younger rivals. The 1997 award may prove to be the hardest-fought contest for years. The drug factor may help or hinder Self, but Bloomsbury already have firm hopes of a Booker triumph with *Fugitive Pieces*, the lyrical debut novel from Anne Michaels.

HarperCollins will want to see the £150,000 it spent on a first novel by the Indian writer Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, rewarded by at least some shortlist appearances. Viking Penguin expects Jim Crace's *Quarantine* – a re-imagining of Jesus's ordeal in the wilderness – to appeal strongly to prize judges.

Later in the year, new works by Ian McEwan, Nadine Gordimer, Brian Moore and Bernard MacLaverly will be jostling for attention, mixing a hard sell with sidelong bids for critical acclaim.

All this frantic schmoozing can pay off for years to come. Five years ago, Bloomsbury's founder Liz Calder put a huge effort into promoting a complex and poetic new novel by a little-known Sri Lankan-Canadian author. It paid off. Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* went on to share the Booker Prize – and that, as everyone now knows, turned out to be far from the final chapter.

An extract from *Great Apes*, chapter one

Humans are what they are because of their humanity. Humans in the wild are very different from chimpanzees. Human social organisation may be impressively complex when viewed through the lens of scientific enquiry, but stripped of this, the raw facts are brute. Humans often consort – and therefore mate – for life. Instead of resolving conflict in a simple manner concordant with dominance hierarchies, human society appears horribly anarchic; bands of humans gather to propagate their own ‘ways of life’ (perhaps primitive forms of ideology) on their fellows. And while humans may display as much regard for their offspring as chimpanzees do, their perverse adhesion to the organising principle of monogamy (perverse

because it confers no apparent genetic advantage) means the gulf between "group" and community ties is large. Old humans are disregarded and neglected far more than old chimpanzees.

But perhaps most significant is the human attitude to touch. Humans, because of their lack of a protective coat, have not evolved the complex rituals of grooming and touch that so define chimpanzee social organisation and gestualisation. Imagine not being groomed! It is almost unthinkable to a chimpanzee that a significant portion of the day should not be given over to this most cohering and sensual of activities. Undoubtedly it is this lack of grooming that renders human sexuality so bizarre to us.

ALWAYS SEARCHING FOR THE LOWEST FUEL PRICES?

[illegible]

'Why was my granddaughter refused a transplant when soccer star got two?'

Girl who took ecstasy tablet died after being refused a new liver by doctors

Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

The grandmother of a teenager who died after being denied a liver transplant yesterday challenged the right of a famous Scottish footballer to have two such operations when her own granddaughter had been refused one.

Margaret Pirie, 56, a former auxiliary nurse, told a fatal accident inquiry she had become angry when told by doctors at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary that her granddaughter, Michelle Paul, would not receive a new liver in the transplant unit. Michelle, 15, was admitted with liver failure and died 23 days after taking half an ecstasy tablet at a rave near her home in Aberdeen.

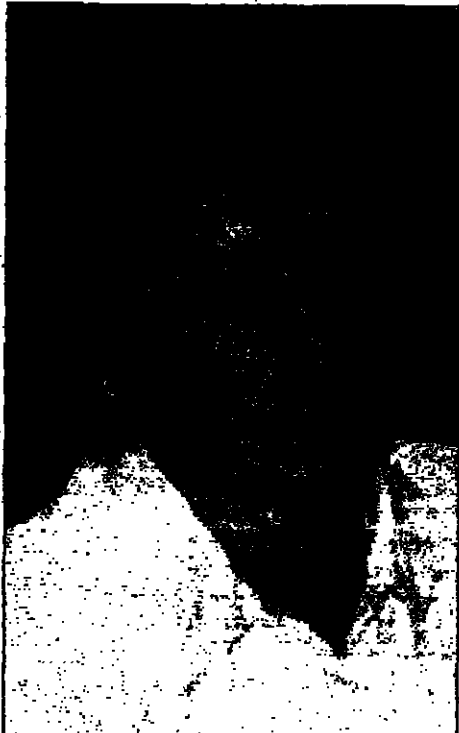
Mrs Pirie said she had asked one of the members of the medical team at the unit, Dr Niall Finlayson, why former Rangers and Scotland soccer star Jim Baxter, whom she described as an "ex-alcoholic football player", had been entitled to two liver transplants.

She claimed that Dr Finlayson told her the decision not to give her granddaughter a transplant had been made on moral grounds by the senior member of the team, Dr Hilary Sanfey.

Mrs Pirie said the moral grounds on which the decision had been made were related to Michelle's mother Carolann's background - she is a self-confessed former drug addict - and Michelle's admission that she took ecstasy.

However, when she met Dr Sanfey herself, the surgeon just kept saying that Michelle was medically unfit for a transplant, Mrs Pirie told the inquiry at Aberdeen Sheriff Court.

She accused Dr Sanfey of wriggling out of answering questions about whether the decision not to go ahead with the operation



Dr Hilary Sanfey (left), who was alleged to have said the transplant refusal was made on moral grounds. The soccer star, Jim Baxter (right) received two transplants



ation had been made on moral grounds.

"As I see it, we were just not worth bothering with. That was the impression I got," she said.

Michelle's death came a week after Leah Betts, from Essex, died when she took an ecstasy tablet at her 18th birthday party.

As I see it, we were just not worth bothering with. That was the impression that I got

Mrs Pirie said that she had confronted Dr Sanfey a few days later in the hospital corridor as her granddaughter was dying.

"She asked me what was wrong," said Mrs Pirie. "I said that Michelle was going to die today."

She claimed that Dr Sanfey had told her that she would never understand, to which Mrs Pirie replied: "I said go, I never will understand, and I just

said get away from me."

Mrs Pirie added: "She just kept saying Michelle was medically unfit. And I said 'Not when she came'. Not when she first came to Edinburgh."

Mrs Pirie told the court she believed the doctors were committing euthanasia. No one from the hospital had come to

stacy may have been the first case of its kind in the world. At that time there had only been seven reported cases of ecstasy causing hepatitis, but none of liver failure.

Only after Michelle's death had cases of liver failure from ecstasy been reported.

Marie Paul, 18, told the court that she had known her sister had taken ecstasy even though she had not found out directly from Michelle.

While Michelle was in hospital in Aberdeen, before she was transferred to Edinburgh, Ms Paul had telephoned the police because she feared someone had given her sister drugs on the ward.

Later, one of the junior doctors on the ward, Margaret McCartney, 25, said she had also suspected Michelle had been given drugs shortly before her condition deteriorated dramatically. However, the court heard that Dr McCartney had examined her and found her "neurologically to be completely intact".

Tests later revealed no trace of drugs other than cannabis. The inquiry, before Sheriff Graeme Warner, continues.



Michelle Paul, who was refused a liver transplant after taking an ecstasy tablet

Wanted: berth for a new nautical language

Britannia may no longer rule the waves, but English lingers on as the maritime language, or at least it did.

With the demise of British seamen, whose numbers have fallen from 70,000 to 30,000 in the last decade alone, there has been an influx of foreign mariners from south-east Asia and Eastern Europe who do not speak English.

Now the European Union is putting £300,000 into a research project which is designed to come up with a single working language, probably based on English, and which all seamen can understand.

The influx of foreign languages has created tensions among the crews on ships where there may now be up to 30 different languages spoken.

There have also been mix-ups and misunderstandings which have led to accidents and deaths.

Incidents have included the desperate search for a Chinese waiter in Wales who spoke the same language as the crew of a salvage tug that was in Milford Haven when the *Sea Empress* ran aground.

As part of the work, researchers from the University of Wales, in Cardiff, are using tape recorders to capture the communications, or the lack of them, on the bridges of selected ships, where there may be a British or a Dutch captain, a Filipino chief officer, a Chinese second mate and an African third officer, all working alongside each other.

"Gradual evolution has changed the composition of seafarers, and they are now predominantly from countries where English is not the first language," said Professor Alastair Cooper who is co-ordinating the research.

"They can have different versions of English too, and the same words can have different meanings. You can get all kinds of problems and many tensions and anxieties," he said.

The team are looking at the extent of language diversity, the use of sign language, and are compiling a report on those accidents where communication problems may have been involved.

"The problem has been highlighted by a number of incidents, including the *Sea Empress* disaster," Professor Cooper said.

"Language was a major factor, for example, in the fire on board a Baltic ferry where 100 people died."

The opportunities for misunderstandings are very great and a lot of casualties have taken place as a consequence," he said.

As well as producing a pilot syllabus for the teaching of maritime English and guidelines for avoiding misunderstandings, the researchers also intend to come up with methods of managing what are described as cross-cultural tensions.

Hogg dismisses concern over BSE risk to dogs

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The Government was insisting last night that scientific evidence gathered six years ago, which suggests that dogs can develop "mad cow disease", was not followed up or published because it was not important.

Yet in an apparently contradictory letter, sent to the League Against Cruel Sports last July, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) said that "research is in progress" to see whether dogs

had genetic differences that might help them resist BSE infection.

As reported yesterday exclusively in *The Independent*, tests in 1991 on the brains of 444 hunting dogs by the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL) in Weybridge, Surrey, found traces of a change in brain chemistry associated with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and scrapie, the equivalent disease of sheep. Nineteen of the brains were affected.

The CVL is now conducting a post-mortem examination on an 11-year-old Norwegian dog which is thought to have died of BSE. The results are expected to be sent to Norway later this week.

But MAFF said yesterday that the results of the 1991 tests had been inconclusive in showing

whether the dogs had definitely contracted the disease. The brains showed "scrapie-associated fibrils" (Safs) rather than the "spongy" holes of advanced BSE or scrapie.

Dr Stephen Dealler, an independent critic of MAFF, said: "Safs are always indicative of a spongiform encephalopathy - like BSE or scrapie. They are the first step before the holes in the brain turn up."

"If the animal dies of another

disease in the meantime, it will have the Safs but not the spongiform holes."

The Minister of Agriculture, Douglas Hogg, insisted that there was no need for concern over the reports.

He said their disclosure "adds nothing to human knowledge" during a tour of North-east England which included a visit to a sausage factory in the marginal Stockton South constituency.

However, it emerged that the CVL did not carry out the logical follow-up experiment. This would have been to inoculate extracts from the dead animals' brains into laboratory animals such as mice, to see if they then developed a BSE-like disease.

But it was done with other animals to confirm the presence of BSE.

Nor was the work published, although at the time it would

have been an important pointer which researchers from around the world could have examined and used to confirm that dogs do not catch BSE - or scrapie.

A MAFF spokesman said yesterday that this was because "we decided to concentrate our work into more important areas such as BSE and its relationship with Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), the human equivalent of BSE".

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news

Stay of execution for the Quantock staghunt

Nicholas Schoon

The Quantock Staghounds may be able to overcome the threat to the hunt's survival which a National Trust ban on their sport threatens. They are expected to approach a neighbouring staghunt to ask if they can use some of their terrain to hunt over.

Yesterday the Quantock Staghounds, which chase red deer on horseback with a pack of dogs, held what bloodsport opponents had hoped would be their last meet. The hunt relies heavily on using Trust land and this month the Trust's ruling council decided not to renew its licence when it expires at the end of April.

But the neighbouring Devon and Somerset Staghounds, which will suffer less from the Trust's decision to ban staghunting on its property, said it would consider any request from the Quantock to use some of its traditional hunting grounds sympathetically. "I'm sure that will be discussed, although there's been no approach as yet," said Tim Yandle, joint master of the Devon and Somerset. "We would help them if we could."

Stag hunting on the Quantock Hills in Somerset has a 500-year history, although the Quantock Staghounds is only 90 years old. By tradition the hunting season for red deer closes at the end of April and reopens in early autumn.

Before the Quantock huntmen and their hounds rode yesterday from the village of West Bagborough to a chorus of cheering supporters, hunt master Bill Fewings said: "It is very, very sad. It is heartbreaking." The Trust had still not spoken to the hunt about its decision, he added.

All four deerhunts in Britain - three in the West Country, one in the New Forest - use some National Trust land but the Quantock is by far the worst affected.

Its "country" covers a relatively small area, and much of the best hunting land, 1,037 acres, is in Trust ownership.



Scent packing: Hounds ready for the last formal outing of the Quantock hunt, which has been banned from National Trust land. But a neighbouring hunt may offer use of its property Photograph: PA

Accused home director had not read care guidelines



Angela Rowe: 'Husband responsible for the business'

Louise Jury

A director of a residential home accused of ill-treating mentally handicapped patients had never read the principal guidelines governing their care, a court was told yesterday.

Angela Rowe, 39, said she had never seen a copy of "Home Life", the national social services regulations which laid down appropriate ways of dealing with such people.

Mrs Rowe denies two counts of ill treating residents and a further two charges of wilfully neglecting residents in homes she ran with her late husband, Gordon, in Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, under the name Longcare Limited between 1983 and 1993. He committed suicide last year before he could be charged with similar offences. Mrs Rowe told Kingston Crown Court in Surrey that her husband had been responsible for handling the business of the homes, Stoke Place Mansion House and Stoke Green House.

Mr Caplan said she had joined the venture as an equal partner with Gordon Rowe and had asked her bank, unsuccessfully, for a loan to help with the establishment of the first home. "You and Gordon were very much together in planning the purchase of Stoke Place House and in setting up the company and you were going to try to achieve your financial part of the partnership by getting a loan from the bank," Mr Caplan said. And he suggested that she was given a share in the company because "you were about to play your full part in Longcare Limited, in effect running Longcare as partners with Gordon."

Mrs Rowe denied this. The court was told that she drew a salary which rose from £8,000 a year to £40,000 a year despite being off work sick for a considerable time.

Mrs Rowe, whose last given address was in Windsor, Berkshire, had told the jury that she

Wife of suicide victim boss tells court she was sleeping partner

and had put her name on a registration document without her knowledge. But Jonathan Caplan QC, cross-examining her, suggested she had been "one of the bosses" and that staff would refer problems to her.

"I am suggesting ... that you are trying to minimise your role and distance yourself from the operations of Longcare Limited," he said.

Mr Caplan said she had joined the venture as an equal partner with Gordon Rowe and had asked her bank, unsuccessfully, for a loan to help with the establishment of the first home. "You and Gordon were very much together in planning the purchase of Stoke Place House and in setting up the company and you were going to try to achieve your financial part of the partnership by getting a loan from the bank," Mr Caplan said. And he suggested that she was given a share in the company because "you were about to play your full part in Longcare Limited, in effect running Longcare as partners with Gordon."

Mrs Rowe denied this. The court was told that she drew a salary which rose from £8,000 a year to £40,000 a year despite being off work sick for a considerable time.

Mrs Rowe, whose last given address was in Windsor, Berkshire, had told the jury that she

had little active involvement with the homes for several significant periods, including 10 months in 1986 when she was suffering post-natal depression and much of 1992 and 1993 after a hysterectomy and a road crash.

But Mr Caplan pointed to detailed entries in the homes record books which suggested she had been involved not only with laundry, toiletries and the catering as she claimed, but also with caring for the residents including details of medication.

Asked why some of the entries were in her handwriting when she said she did not work at Stoke Green House between 1987 and 1990, she said: "Some of the staff were Indian and could not write."

Nigel Rowe, Gordon's son, was responsible there, she said. "I may have put things in the report book but it was not my baby, it was Nigel Rowe's."

Questioned further she said: "I did not do any physical work with the residents."

Mr Caplan said the evidence of several expert witnesses had indicated that mentally handicapped people such as the autistic and Down's syndrome residents at Longcare, should not be punished or shouted at.

Asked whether she had ever punished a resident, Mrs Rowe said: "Never. I would send a resident to their room to cool off but that's it." She admitted shouting, but "not abuse", and denied recommending to one member of staff that she should clip a resident around the ear.

Two other former members of staff, Desmond Tully and Lorraine Field, also each face four charges of ill-treating residents. The case continues.

Haughey wins a reprieve in secret gifts case

Alan Murdoch

Charles Haughey was yesterday given a temporary reprieve before answering claims by the former supermarket magnate Ben Dunne that he secretly paid the politician £1.3m while Taoiseach between 1987 and 1991.

The payments-to-politicians tribunal at Dublin Castle granted an application by Mr Haughey's counsel, Eoin McGonigal, to defer a decision on the confidentiality of discussions between Mr Haughey and Mr Dunne's solicitor, Noel Smyth.

Mr Smyth told the tribunal on Friday that he could not disclose what Mr Haughey told him unless specifically ordered to, as the talks related to his role as Mr Dunne's lawyer. His account of those conversations may reveal whether Mr Haughey knew at all times that Mr Dunne was the source of funds obtained to pay off his large debts.

Mr McGonigal stressed that he was not asking for an indefinite delay, but simply one "allowing the tribunal to complete its inquiries into matters that relate to my client. It seems to me that I am entitled to have that evidence before advising my client, and it should be available to [Mr Haughey] first," he said.

The breathing space given to Mr Haughey echoes numerous eleven-hour escapes as opponents came close to unseating him during his 12 years leading Fianna Fail, Ireland's largest party.

But the issue will still have to be faced probably within the next month. If Mr Haughey cannot refute evidence heard to date he could face ruinous tax

demands or court action seeking return of the £1.3m from the new management of Dunne's Stores.

The tribunal chairman, Mr Justice Brian McCracken, agreed to Mr McGonigal's plea that investigations in London and elsewhere gathering more evidence should be completed first before any decision to order Mr Smyth to reveal what took place during his five meetings with Mr Haughey.

Mr McGonigal said Mr Haughey only received Mr Smyth's statement of evidence last Friday and "while it has been possible to make certain inquiries since that time, [they] will not be complete for some time."

Earlier, the Taoiseach, John Bruton, appeared before the tribunal and confirmed that his Fine Gael party had received donations of £50,000 in April 1991 and £100,000 in 1983 from Mr Dunne following meetings with the businessman.

He said it had been made explicitly clear that no political favours were being given in return for the funds, and Mr Dunne had agreed to this "with alacrity."

But he was reminded that in July 1991 he had told an earlier tribunal "not even the party leader" would normally know the source of business donations. Mr Bruton said yesterday that he had been referring primarily then to donations from the beef industry.

Approaches to Mr Dunne came amid requests to corporate chiefs to help clear Fine Gael's then debt of more than £1m. It emerged that Dunne's was Fine Gael's largest corporate donor at that time.

Suspect held for McGrath death

Peter Beal

A 27-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of murdering judge's daughter Rachel McGrath, whose throat was cut as she waited outside a public house on Friday night, police said today.

The man was also being questioned over the abduction of a 17-year-old girl, said a Greater Manchester Police spokesman.

Ms McGrath, 27, was murdered in a frenzied knife attack as she arrived to collect her boyfriend from the pub in Bramhall, Stockport.

Her father Brian McGrath, 55, is a district judge in the family division in Bolton and Bury. Early yesterday a man was arrested in Caernarfon, North Wales, in connection with the

kidnapping of the 17-year-old girl in Stockport. The police spokesman said: "In connection with (Ms McGrath's) murder, a 27-year-old local man is in custody in Stockport suspected of this offence."

He is also suspected of the abduction of a 17-year-old girl from Stockport who was taken to Caernarfon, where she escaped unharmed.

"The man was unknown to either of the girls before these two incidents."

It is understood the 17-year-old girl, whose identity police are keeping confidential, was abducted as she was driving to work in Cheadle, Stockport, on Saturday morning.

A police operation was mounted after she managed to flee from the car in which she was being held. - PA News

DAILY POEM

Turns

By Tony Harrison

I thought it made me look more "working class" (as if a bit of chequered cloth could bridge that gap!) I did a turn in it before the glass. My mother said: *It suits you, your dad's cap.* (She preferred me to wear suits and part my hair: *You're every bit as good as that lot are!*)

All the pension queue came out to stare. Dad was sprawled beside the postbox (still VR), his cap turned inside up beside his head, smudged H A H in purple Indian ink and Brylcreem slicks displayed so folk might think he wanted charity for dropping dead.

He never begged. For now! Death's reticence crowns his life's, and me, I'm opening my trap to bask the class that broke him for the pence that splash like brackish tears into our cap.

To mark Tony Harrison's sixtieth birthday, this week BBC Radio Three is broadcasting a series of poems read by the author. From today until Friday, the Daily Poem will correspond with his readings. "Turns" can be heard today on R3 just before the 1300 news. All the broadcast poems appear in *Tony Harrison's Selected Poems* (Penguin, £6.99).

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Rock 'n' roll becomes respectable

Young people urged to join music business as career with prospects

lan Barrell

The Music Biz - for years regarded by sensible parents as a dangerous hotbed of rebellion and job insecurity - is now being eagerly promoted by the Government as a career with prospects.

The Department for Education and Employment has funded an important study, launched today, aimed at helping young people to move into an industry which is now one of Britain's biggest export earners.

The managers of artists from Blur to Simply Red and Gary Glitter have contributed to research aimed at helping the British music industry to be better qualified and more business-minded than its competitors.

New music business qualifications are being drawn up so that young people can follow an industry-approved career path. It is a huge turnaround for an industry which has traditionally recruited on an "it's not what you know, but who you know" basis.

The change has been brought about by the IMF, a London-based organisation which represents the management teams of most of the biggest names in British pop music.

James Fisher, general secretary of the IMF - which commissioned the new study along with the DfEE - said youngsters often joined the music industry on a whim.

"They are coming along saying, 'Isn't this groovy man, my kid brother plays in a band'. They are doing it simply from a love of music," he said. "Somebody has got to put some professionalism into it."

The study, *Lifetime Learning within the UK Music Industry*, canvassed the views of 120 of Britain's leading music managers, responsible for the careers of most of the big names in British pop.

The authors, based at the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University, found that 59 per cent of the managers admitted to having no relevant qualifications.

Liam Murphy, head of the research team, said: "If we are to remain competitive in what is now one of our great industrial strengths then we must make sure we have the necessary training and education programmes."

The UK music industry is now valued at £2.5bn and employs 115,000 people full-time.

According to the report, British popular music is now in its third golden period, with Oasis helping to inspire a position of strength in the global market to compare with previous high points led by the Beatles in the 1960s and Culture Club in the early 1980s.

But there are ominous signs which threaten the 20 per cent share of world record sales at present enjoyed by British acts.

The record-buying boom of the early 1990s which was inspired by the arrival of the CD format is now over. The research team found that the growing markets for record sales were in developing countries where English is not the dominant language. Mexico, South Korea and Taiwan are now in the top 15 most valuable pop markets.

Although the British music industry's sophisticated marketing machine has enabled it to boost sales in emerging markets such as Brazil and Indonesia, the report states that the rise of recorded indigenous music in such countries is likely to force down Britain's global market share.

The report debunks a succession of predictions that have been made about the global future of pop music.

The idea of an MTV-inspired homogenisation of world pop has been proved wrong as the station has been forced to splinter its coverage to cover tastes in rock, rap, pop and dance.

Similarly the death of vinyl has not come about. "By early 1995," the researchers noted, "it was clear that the black vinyl LP and 12-inch was alive and well and staging a recovery."

The UK domestic expenditure on records stands at £1.7bn, which is nearly 7 per cent of the world market.



Pointer to success: A producer at work in a London recording studio yesterday. Business qualifications for the music industry are now being drawn up. Photograph: Kalpesh Rathgaj

Big players holding back opportunity



Björk: The Icelandic singer's label is looking for backing.

The biggest obstacle facing the British music industry is its domination by the leading record companies, according to the managers of British bands and singers, writes lan Barrell.

In an anonymous government-funded questionnaire of 120 British music managers, 72 per cent cited the "actions of major record companies" as the main barrier to opportunity.

The stifling role of the big companies was seen as more damaging to the industry than the lack of diversity in pop radio, or the lack of resources for music education.

"From their position of strength, the majors that buy into independent labels can dictate terms and conditions, ... including the promotion of the product, the image of the artist and even live performance," said Liam Murphy, of the Policy Research Institute at Leeds

Metropolitan University, who conducted the study.

The report's findings coincided with news that One Little Indian, the independent record label behind Björk and Skunk Anansie, is looking for substantial backing from a larger entertainment group.

The label made pre-tax profits of £414,354 in 1995, and its need for outside support will re-open the debate about how independent the British "indy" record market really is.

The volatility of the market has already driven several prominent labels to seek alliances with the majors. Creation records, Oasis's label, sold 49 per cent of their shareholding to Sony Music in 1992. The Japanese company paid another £14m last spring to extend the arrangement for another five years.

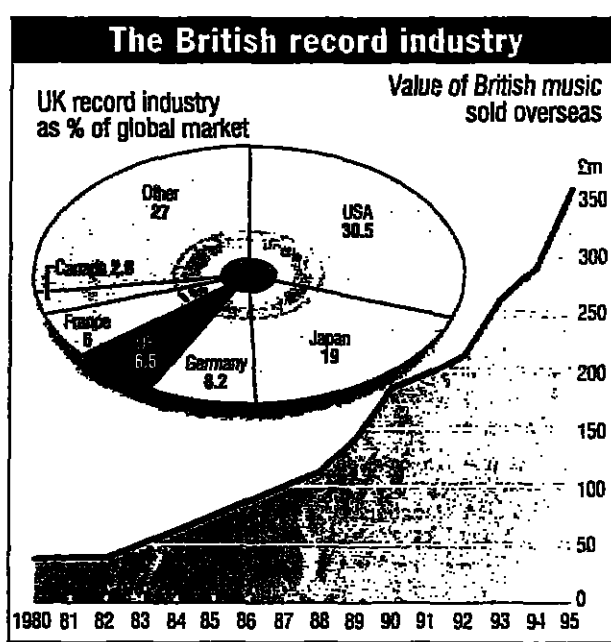
The big five record compa-

nies, EMI, Polygram, BMG, Warner and Sony have carved up 80 per cent of the British music industry between them.

"When independents have artists with mass appeal they do not have the capacity to deal with the demand," Mr Murphy said. "A number of independents have a history of being run by people who are passionate about music rather than having fantastic business sense."

He cited the example of Factory records' failure to make a profit from New Order's *Blue Monday*, the biggest selling 12-inch single of all time, because of the cost of the packaging.

Yet while the majors have the capacity to deal with famous artists, they also have a fear of taking risks, thus stifling creativity at ground level.



HALF THE FAT OF REAL MILK CHOCOLATE.

Last night an advertisement appeared on television in which it was claimed that a confectionery product, FLYTE, was a real chocolate bar with half the fat of milk chocolate. The manufacturers of FLYTE would like to point out that this claim, which was made in all good faith, is in fact true, and would like to apologise for any disappointment or emotional stress suffered by the public while impatiently awaiting the launch of FLYTE. "Sorry it took so long."

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Dealer who strove to shine with PM



Christian Wolmar on links between John Major, a diamond merchant and Tory party funds

Willie Nagel is a multi-millionaire diamond broker in his seventies who, according to acquaintances, does not mix very well with other people but desperately wants to be accepted by the establishment.

Letters leaked to the *Independent* show that Mr Nagel first met John Major through his Huntingdon Constituency agent, Peter Brown, with whom he had dinner in 1991.

The following year, he arranged tickets for Wimbledon Finals Day for Mr Brown and his wife Antonia. Mr Brown thanked him and confirmed his "very generous offer of sponsorship of £5,000 each on the occasion of the Opera and Concert Evening on 25 July and our Victory Ball on 13 November". The Huntingdon Conservative Association then invoiced Mr Nagel for £10,000 for "advertising in brochures".

After another lunch with Mr Brown, Mr Nagel wrote to Mr Major's agent on 23 October 1992 enclosing promotional material on a pilotless aircraft developed by Israeli Aircraft Industries. The letter said: "As discussed over lunch, I am sending the relevant material regarding what is considered the best protection for troops in any fighting zone in the world. It is believed that the situation in Bosnia warrants such a purchase and it is for this reason that I am enclosing the main details. I sincerely hope that you will be able to activate it."

Mr Brown then wrote to Mr Major at Downing Street with information on the "combat-proven UAV" system. He told the Prime Minister: "I'm not suggesting that any action could be taken upon this but I wonder whether you might pass the information on to any department concerned with such equipment, since it may be of interest to them."

Mr Nagel later sent Mr Brown a mugshot of J&B Sarcy champagne to celebrate the New Year in 1993, which Mr Brown said he would drink "when there is more to celebrate".

In May 1993 Mr Nagel wrote to Mr Major at the constituency headquarters trying to interest the Prime Minister in having lunch with a friend who could have been useful to the party and concluded by saying: "I am taking the liberty of writing to you directly to Huntingdon and via Peter who, naturally, is the only person who is aware of it all."

Mr Brown wrote to Mr Nagel in January 1994 after another meeting and saying that

"I will, of course, discuss with the PM the points you raised on the next appropriate occasion but I really want to say thank you for once again offering such generous support to the Conservative Party in Huntingdon". In March 1993 and April 1994, there are further invoices of £5,000 from the association to Mr Nagel for "political briefings and information". Mr Nagel also agreed to sponsor the Conservative Agents' Journal with an advertisement costing £800 for his lobbying firm, Punchline.

However, during 1994 the relationship between Mr Nagel and the Conservatives in Huntingdon appears to sour. Mr Nagel telephoned the Prime Minister at home. This apparently led to a complaint to Mr Nagel, who then wrote to Arabella Warburton, the Mr Major's diary secretary, to "correct any possible misunderstandings". He had not understood that "the PM himself had requested that I should only call at No 10. Had I realised this, ob-

sonal style to which, I had become accustomed".

By this time, Mr Brown seemed to become worried about the relationship. A lengthy briefing note from the Huntingdon association to Mr Major on 5 August, headed "Willie Nagel", said: "I think we need to address this problem to the benefit of us all. Quite clearly, the situation is getting rather heated."

The note said: "There is no doubt that there is an element of self-interest in WN's wish to be closely associated with us. He has a network of friends, some of whom could be very important to the party. They include diplomats, industrialists and prominent members of the Jewish community. Notwithstanding his eagerness to let it be known that he has made your acquaintance, many of his contacts are highly influential."

It continued: "WN was tremendously helpful in talking to Lord Rothermere during the period when Simon Heffer was doing his worst for you... There is a down side of which we are all aware. His persistence along with his ability never to take no for an answer is wearing in the extreme, which is part of the cause of the relationship souring."

However, the relationship clearly improved, as on 28 November, Mr Nagel, in a letter to Mr Major, acknowledges receipt of "your friendly letter of 22 November" and went on to remark on "cool-headedness and your ability to come to the heart of any problem, which are the essential ingredients of a great man".

Mr Nagel also talked about the forthcoming visit to Israel by the Prime Minister: "I am pleased to hear that you are ready to consider a visit to the Diamond Exchange" (where Mr Nagel's Israel headquarters are located). He was hopeful that the programme "will include me". In fact, Mr Nagel was invited on the trade mission in March 1995, which included a meeting with the then prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin.

In the tour brochure, Mr Major talked about "the presence of such a distinguished group of senior British businessmen". Indeed, most of the group of 28 businessmen were chairmen or senior executives of quoted companies such as Lord Young (Cable and Wireless), Richard Giordano (British Gas), Sir Robert Clarke (United Biscuits), Sir Richard Greenbury (Marks & Spencer), Sir Christopher Hogg (Reuters), Martin Laing (John

Laing), Sir Sidney Lipworth (National Westminster) and Lord Sterling (P&O). However, the Diamond Exchange was not on the itinerary.

Mr Nagel still manages to remain in Conservative circles. In December he attended a Conservative Friends of Israel dinner at which Mr Major was present and both men were also at a Huntingdon Foundation Dinner organised a couple of months ago.

A brochure for the aircraft Mr Nagel was promoting

visually I would not have gone against his wishes". He assured Ms Warburton that "there is no need to change the PM's telephone number at home because of my actions, as indeed I am not a 'telephone trespasser'". Mr Nagel then wrote to Mr Major explaining why he phoned him at home. He said he wanted to warn the Prime Minister that Andrew Stone, "a very able new managing director of Marks and Spencer" had asked Mr Nagel to arrange a private lunch with Tony Blair and out of loyalty to the Conservative cause he wanted Mr Major to know.

Mr Nagel also appeared hurt that Mr Major had sent a formal refusal to an invitation to his daughter's wedding. "This seemed totally out of character with your normal warm and per-

sonal style to which, I had become accustomed".

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PACKARD

Blacks play race card on Labour

Ian Burrell

The race card has finally been played on Labour, not by a Tory backbencher but by senior figures in the black community.

The television presenter Darius Howes and an alliance of black church leaders in south London are seeking to mobilise the black vote behind the Liberal Democrats. In particular, they are backing Keith Kerr, a black LibDem candidate, to oust Labour's Kate Hoey from her Vauxhall constituency, which includes Brixton. They claim Labour has overlooked the concerns of black people while concentrating its efforts on the fight for middle England.

Bernie Grant, Labour candidate for Tottenham, appeared to endorse such a view when he attacked the "offensive" use of a bulldog in Labour's campaign. He told a meeting of the

North Islington Black Socialist Society: "The question of race has been raised in an obscure way by the Labour Party."

In his speech, delivered to a private meeting last week and made public yesterday, he said: "Regiments like the Coldstream Guards had this bulldog as their mascot and they used to terrorise people in Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. 'When they went into battle against the Zulus, they used to sing 'Rule Britannia', 'Land of Hope and Glory' and these types of songs."

"It is a damn disgrace that the Labour Party of all parties, that is supposed to be an international party, it is a disgrace that they should use these kinds of symbols in order to push for the fact that they are patriotic."

In Vauxhall, Mr Kerr, a manager with British Airways and who was born in nearby Peckham, has won the support of

several prominent black church leaders.

The Reverend Hewie Andrew, a Methodist minister, and the Reverend David Udo, director of race relations for the Diocese of Southwark, have organised meetings for Mr Kerr to speak to members of other black-led churches.

Mr Andrew said: "If Keith wins then all the political parties will have to think, think and think again. They would never be able to take us for granted again."

Canvassing on a south London estate yesterday, Ms Hoey said she was not concerned by the threat posed by Mr Kerr and expected to increase her already large majority of over 10,000.

She said she had been well-received by black constituents during the campaign. "The black community is nearly 100 per cent solid behind me," she said.

السلامة

THE INDEPENDENT
election '97

Key marginals lean toward Labour

John Major is pinning his hopes of winning the election on those still undecided. Yesterday *Independent* reporters visited six Tory marginals and found voters coming off the fence and switching their allegiance to Tony Blair

Michael Streeter

Middle England is beginning to swing behind New Labour in significant numbers as polling day approaches, according to *The Independent's* group of disaffected Conservatives in a key marginal seat.

Over the final, crucial weekend a number of the group in Redditch, Worcestershire – who have swayed to-and-fro during the campaign – have decided to take the “time for a change” message to heart. After much soul-searching in recent days, six out of the 13 will “definitely” vote for Labour with one undecided.

This is the strongest move towards Tony Blair's party in the group for some time and suggests a healthy victory in Redditch and augers well for the party in picking up the vote of so-called *Mondeo* Man of Middle England.

The reasons for the belated change vary between a feeling that the party under Tony Blair, who has impressed the voters more in recent days, can finally be trusted on the economy as

REDDITCH

well as other issues, and a sense that the Tories are tired and have broken too many promises.

Butcher Brian Nicolls, 60, a late switcher, saw the Prime Minister's weekend interview with Jonathan Dimbleby and that made up his mind. “I watched the interviews because



I wanted to make up my mind. Mr Major was asked about previous promises not to raise tax and he could not give a straight forward answer. I have not voted Labour for many years but I'm going to now.

Engineer Mark Redfern, 29, saw Tony Blair's Frost interview and liked what the Labour leader said including Labour's support for the Social Chapter. “I was a bit disappointed with

Mr Blair early in the campaign but he's doing better now. I just hope he keeps his promises.”

Another Labour voter will be former British Gas travel manager Roger Frost, 54, who feels let down by the Conservatives, including over the way elderly people have been forced to sell their homes to pay for long-term care.

“It's a big change for me to vote Labour. I've never done so before. I'd never have voted for Neil Kinnock but I feel a lot more comfortable with Tony Blair. I feel at home with him.”

Warehouse operative Adrian Blick, 30, has wavered over voting for Labour but will now back them because he feels they have better policies on the NHS, schools and the jobless. “I think the result will be tight as some will change their mind at the last minute. But I will not. It just feels right to vote for Labour, we need a change.”

For local government worker Craig Cotes, 37, backing New Labour is more anti-Conservative than pro-Mr Blair. “To be honest I think Tony Blair is a bit of a prat. But the

country's in a rut and we need something new. I hope Labour proves me wrong.” He liked some of the Liberal Democrat's policies but felt the party was “out of the running.”

Toolmaker Andrew Osciak, 35, has been more and more impressed with Tony Blair who will win his vote. “I saw him on the party election broadcast when he was talking at home and he

made a lot of sense.” He feels the Tories are split and not fully committed to winning and likes Labour's policies on education and especially training for young people.

Former sales consultant Susan Lovett, 38, is typical of many of those remaining with the Conservatives, believing the party is stronger on the core issue of the economy. “I just

trust the Tories more.” She adds: “Perhaps if Tony Blair had been more willing to face the voters directly I would have looked at him with more respect.”



Eleventh hour: The Undecideds in key constituencies like Redditch are thinking perhaps it is “time for a change”.

Photograph:

STEVENAGE



Stevenage: Tories now on the endangered list

Victim of the recession is loath to forgive

Jolo Moyes

Many Stevenage voters are being diverted away from their natural home with the Conservatives. Jo Hilsden, who with her husband, Trevor, runs TJ's Café, can reel off a list of small shopkeepers who have closed in the last four years – the kitchen designer, the lady with the outsize shoe shop and so on – it is this list which has turned her against the Tories.

“I was a Tory voter. But we've been here four years. And in that time we've suffered so much under the recession and we've had no help at all. When we asked for help, they said it was just something we all had to go through. They said it was the global economy. Now they're trying to claim the credit for it getting better.”

Mrs Hilsden could forgive the Conservatives almost anything but she couldn't forgive them letting her down. “They're not the party of small business. I'm voting for Tony Blair.” In the 1980s Stevenage embodied a Tory dream, with its high levels of new owner-occupation and young, aspirational families. But it has been bruised by the recession and feels reluctant to forgive.

With the closure of firms and unemployment creeping up to 6 per cent, this is a place 40 minutes from London where it is possible to see a choice of flats for £25,000; a very tired new town. In this climate, local candidates have taken on an unusual significance. What matters, say voters, is what they will do for Stevenage. And this is where the Tories are losing

votes. Despite an impressive list of visiting heavyweight support, few seem to have seen Timothy Wood, the candidate, canvassing in the flesh, and he has failed to capitalise on any residual goodwill. Voters like Rachel Barber say their vote has been determined by “effective” canvassing on behalf of Labour candidate Barbara Follett. “Barbara Follett seems very Stevenage-orientated.”

Her whole family have been Tory voters, she said. “But none of them is very sure any more.”

The problem faced by local Conservatives is that they are seen to be campaigning against their own record. Many local Conservative voters say they have switched on the basis of their own experience of apparently declining services.

Pensioner Violet Piper abandoned a lifetime habit of voting Conservative for the Liberal Democrats on the basis of education and the NHS. She was having to help finance her grandchildren through university. “They just don't do enough to help students.”

Her brother recently arrived from South Africa and got jaundice. “The NHS said he had to wait a week for tests and he was getting yellower and thinner. He'd paid all his taxes. In the end he went back to South Africa early and they did it straight away,” she said. Her husband, Bob, also a Tory voter, seemed minded to stick with them, she said. “But I'll persuade him.” Overall, Stevenage voters appear to reinforce the adage that opposition parties do not win elections, governments lose them.

Mood of change threatens Tory fight back

TAMWORTH

Michael Streeter

Twelve months ago New Labour won a crushing victory over the Conservatives in the South East Staffordshire by-election. On Thursday the party seems certain to repeat the win in the redrawn seat of Tamworth – though by a reduced margin – according to a survey of former Conservative voters.

Out of 15 people who voted Tory in recent General Elections, three said that they would definitely vote Labour, six will stay with the Conservatives, and the others are undecided. The mood of change, coupled with signs of tactical voting, indicates that New Labour will comfortably achieve the 5.2 per cent swing it needs based on the 1992 result.

The Liberal Democrats may have won the moral arguments in many voters' eyes but will pick up fewer votes; as one woman put it: “In the end the choice is between red or blue.”

Among the switchers the mood is more a protest against the last 18 years than enthusiasm for Tony Blair.

Businessman Tony Bishop, 51, believes the Government has run out of steam and is voting Labour for the first time.

“They've had 18 years in office and if they've not done what they wanted they've wasted their time,” he said. “Labour are untied and I'm a little nervous. But it's the only option I can see.”

Civil servant Hanora Orme, another switcher, is worried about the right wing taking over. “Having been in for so long they are bringing in extreme measures. New Labour

seem more middle of the road, how the Tories used to be.”

Garth Thomas, 57, is a “cradle Conservative” who will now vote Labour. Self-employed, he was forced to give up one business through ill health – and feels the Conservatives have forgotten those who earn less than the average national wage.

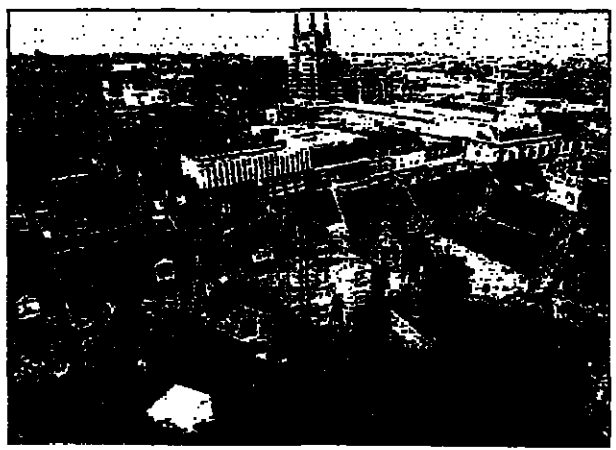
Former Conservative voter Linda Chetwind, 47, is put off by the negative election campaign. She has real concerns over the state of the NHS but is still confused about whom to support. “Half of me says that I know where I am with the Conservatives, but I think I will probably vote Labour.”

John Thomas, 54, will decide at the last minute. He rates Paddy Ashdown's intelligence and honesty but says his party has no chance of winning. After voting Conservative at three general elections Mr Thomas believes Tony Blair should probably be given a chance.

Carole Kelly, 48, is too torn between the main parties to make a decision yet but when pressed says she will probably take the “safer” option of voting Conservative again.

Europe is the main worry for some older voters. Stanley Lang, 80, will switch from the Tories to the Referendum Party: “I want to be independent from Europe,” he says.

Obviously for the Conservatives some non-Tories may vote tactically. Liberal Democrat supporter Karen Gray, 29, a local government worker, was quite blunt. “I'm voting Labour because they have a better chance of winning than the Liberal Democrats here.”



The choice is red or blue, say Tamworth voters

BEDFORD



Bedford: 61st on Labour's critical list

Conservatives' battle over disillusionment

Kim Sengupta

The situation is simple. Bedford is 61st on the list of 100 critical seats Labour must win to get a majority in the Commons and form a new government. And circumstances could hardly be better to achieve that goal.

The boundary changes have turned Bedford from a Tory bedrock with a majority of over 16,000 to a marginal with a majority of 5,000. Crucially, the remaining Tory vote is hardly solid. There appears to be a mood of disillusionment and drift. Even if the discontented do not all go to Labour, a significant number appear intent on deserting their party.

As Labour's Patrick Wall and Bob Blackman for the Conservatives fight that last yard towards the line, this is the mood on the streets.

Some Conservatives are leaving the fold, but more for the Liberal Democrats than Labour. Some are even thinking of voting for the Referendum Party. At the same time, there's a significant number of people who have not made up their minds, as well as a large pool of apathy.

Cheryl Wharton-Logue, of Winchester Road, Bedford, who works in promotions, will switch her vote to the Liberal Democrats from the Conservatives. She said: “I am angry at the way John Major allowed the health service to be run down. I have got three children and I am extremely worried about the state of education.”

Her mother, Beryl Rogers, a retired administrative assistant, has voted Liberal Democrat in

the past and will do so again. She stated: “It makes me angry when people say a vote for the Lib Dems will be a vote wasted. They are the only ones who are honest about their policies.”

Peter Willis, a retired dental surgeon, will switch his vote from Liberal Democrats to Labour this time around. He used to vote Conservative but stopped when “they no longer cared about poor people. I will be voting Labour.”

Geoffrey Wheeler, a 39-year-old account executive is a Liberal Democrat convert. He said he was disgusted by the aura of sleaze surrounding the Tories. He added: “I had voted Conservative in the past, including the last election, but I cannot do so for the time being. I'm sick and tired of all the sexual and financial scandals.”

Richard Nelson, 37, a computer systems manager toyed with the idea of voting Labour but returned to the Conservatives after Tony Blair left him underwhelmed. He said: “At the start of the campaign I was thinking of voting Labour. But the longer it went on the less convinced I became. I'll be voting Conservative.”

Traditional Labour voters appear to be staying with their party and are also fairly confident that they will wrest Bedford, and with it the country, from the Tories.

John Dickens, 43, Head of Politics at the University of Luton, of Castle Road, Bedford, said: “I voted Labour in the past and I shall do so again. With the boundary changes I think we've got a very good chance of winning this seat.”

Hard to put a face to predicted Labour swing

CLEETHORPES

Steve Boggan

Talk to a traditional Conservative voter in Cleethorpes and you will encounter resigned acceptance that a Labour MP will be elected here on Thursday for the first time in living memory. Labour supporters will tell you the same: so will Liberal Democrats. Yet the signs on the street yesterday were that this seat is not so clear cut as many voters assume.

In order to take the seat from Michael Brown, the right-of-centre Tory, the Blairite Shona McIsaac needs to overturn a majority of about 6,500. Statisticians say taking Cleethorpes, Labour's 74th target seat, would give Labour a majority of at least 30. Boundary changes have been kind to Labour, eradicating some of the Tory heartlands in the southern parts of the old Brigg and Cleethorpes constituency. Party canvassers say old Tories are coming over to Labour in their droves, but we found precious few on the streets yesterday.

Many people intending to vote Conservative said they believed Labour would win. But, when asked whether their friends were switching to Labour, none could name any. Alan Briscoe and his wife, Terry, both in their fifties, said they wavered for a time, but ultimately felt they couldn't trust Tony Blair. “I'm afraid I can remember what it was like the last time Labour were in, and I believe the unions are waiting in the wings,” said Mr Briscoe.

One waverer *The Independent* spoke to two weeks ago has now decided to come down on the

side of the Conservatives. John Bayliss, 49, a financial adviser, said he had been swayed by Labour's plans for Scottish devolution.

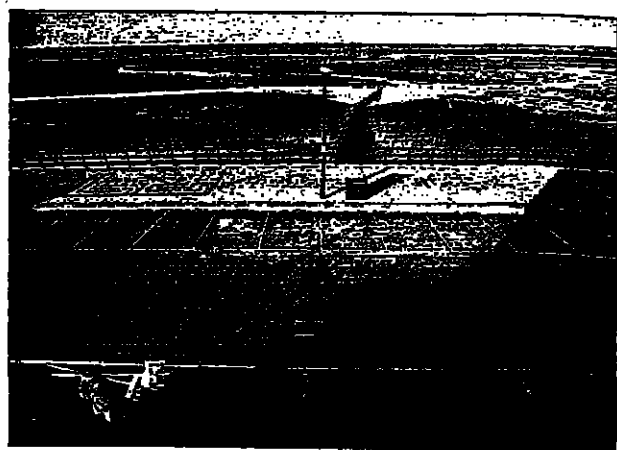
“I believe that is the thin end of the wedge,” he said. Mr Bayliss was also swayed by the Conservatives' promise to hold a referendum on a single currency. He was unaware that Labour had made the same pledge, reflecting the Labour campaign hierarchy's concern that they have failed to get the party's policy on Europe across to many voters.

There was some evidence that young people are impressed by the honesty of the Liberal Democrats, although there was a belief, too, that a Lib-Dem vote was a waste.

Sarah Langley, 20, said: “I'm voting Labour tactically because I want the Tories out. But if there was any chance of the Liberal Democrat [Keith Meltton] getting in, I'd vote for him. I like their policies better than Labour's. Labour seems to have forgotten about the ordinary people.”

However, the rump of traditional Labour voters in the constituency feel confident that they will win and they see Tony Blair and his reforms as the reason why one nation Tories will switch.

“John Major doesn't seem to have any life in him, whereas Tony Blair has revitalised Labour,” said Kathleen Wilbourne, 50. “People are ready for a change but they are also concerned about other issues, particularly health. Hospitals round here are so bad, I'd rather sit my throat than go in.”



On target: But Labour's new support hard to pin down

Significant minority could swing Tory seat to Labour

WATFORD

Fran Abrams

Tory voters in this previously safe constituency are now unhappy with their party. Most will return to the fold, unable, in the end, to bring themselves to vote for anyone else.

But a significant minority will not. The swing in Watford could be enough to send Labour's Claire Ward to Westminster. If it does, Watfordians will be able to boast that theirs is the youngest MP – Ms Ward, a trainee solicitor, is just 24. *The Independent's* small and entirely unscientific survey supported

the party's claim that it was just ahead of the Tories, who have held the seat since 1979.

Labour needs a 7 per cent swing to overturn the 9,500 majority with which Tristan Garel-Jones won here in 1992. If the win reflects a uniform national picture, Labour will have a 50-seat majority in Parliament.

Valerie Hayden, who works as a secretary in London, is typical of those unhappy Tories who will turn out in the end to support their party. “I think I've decided,” she said. “Quite frankly, I can't see Tony Blair

as Prime Minister. I'm not entirely happy, but I don't think anyone is entirely happy with their government. I don't want to part with our currency and I think Labour would do that.”

Her concern with Europe reflects a trend in Watford that could be the undoing of the Tory candidate, Robert Gordon, who hopes to take over Mr Garel-Jones's former place in Westminster.

The Referendum Party seems to be polling strongly

here – the Tories, talking down the problem, have apparently admitted that it could take 2,500 votes.

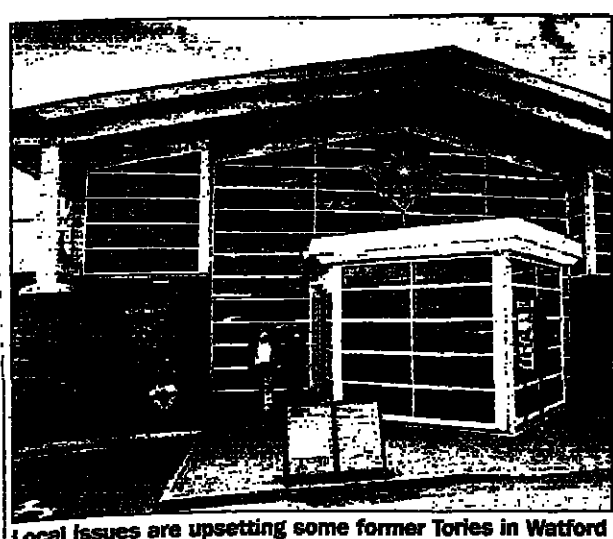
Among the former Tories who will support Labour is Edward Hain, a retired sales manager. He believes in a “Common Market”, but not in a single currency or in a federal Europe. “I don't believe anybody should vote for anybody else. A month ago neither Labour, nor the Conservatives were the slightest bit interest-

ed in Europe. It's only because of the Referendum Party that they have been forced to make promises about it,” he said.

Local issues are also upsetting some former Tories. Jane Seager, a mother, is angry that she has not been able to find an acceptable secondary school place for her child. She will either vote Liberal Democrat or not vote at all. “All the schools we have applied to are grant-maintained. They have been given carte blanche to do what they want by this government. I won't go blue again, but I definitely couldn't vote Labour.”

Others have decided to back new Labour. Vipul Patel, director of a software company, voted Conservative in the past. This time he will vote Labour. “They've screwed it up,” he said. “It's the sleaze – it's terrible. You can't vote for someone you don't trust any more.”

A former Conservative-voting factory worker, who did not want to give his name, felt the same. He, too, will probably vote Labour, though he is less sure. “My money has gone up by £10 in the last five years, and they voted themselves a 26 per cent rise,” he said.



Local issues are upsetting some former Tories in Watford

John is 1520

English Tory finds no meanness on the streets of Belfast



David McKitterick on Ulster's good-natured election campaign

At 9am yesterday, Sarah Dines, Conservative candidate for East Belfast, was being hugged by John Major in Belfast city centre. At 11am she was standing in the rain in an urban republican enclave, surrounded by Sinn Féin posters and anti-British murals.

It was all a far cry from her Essex home. The Prime Minister had been enclosed in a phalanx of security but in the Short Strand, a tiny speck of Catholic green in the otherwise red white and blue Protestant sea of East Belfast, Ms Dines was accompanied only by her husband.

An energetic barrister, she has been amazed at just how different things are in Northern Ireland. "Electioneering is infinitely more civilised here than on the mainland," she said. "When I was a Basildon district councillor I had leaflets torn up in front of me. I would actually get spat on in some of the council estates. There was so much vitriol."

Belfast, by contrast, turns out to be a much more well-behaved place. "People are far nicer here," she enthused. "They are genuinely really polite and mild-mannered. The average man on the doorstep will say, 'Well, no, I'm not your supporter but

good luck to you,' and he'll smile. It's so refreshing."

East Belfast is Peter Robinson's kingdom, held by the Democratic Unionist party deputy leader for nearly two decades. There is no real chance of Ms Dines depositing him although, as she said, "if everybody who has promised to vote for me does, then I'm the next MP for East Belfast." Belfast-style courtesy extends, it seems, into the realm of the diplomatic falsehood.

The promises to vote for her have all come from Protestant districts. In Short Strand yesterday she won no pledges of support but, just as she had predicted, everyone was polite and good-mannered, and no one told her to get back to England.

Instead, two old ladies smiled and chatted amiably. "I vote for whoever I take a fancy to on the day," laughed one. "I vote for Sinn Féin, always," said the other, pleasantly enough. They were unimpressed by Ms Dines's observations that people in Northern Ireland had much more money spent on them than elsewhere in the UK: they may be polite in the Short Strand, but gratitude to British governments is in short supply.

The only thing that really scan-

dalised Ms Dines was the number of non-voters. "I don't vote at all, none of my family do," said an old lady. Another woman shook her head: "I don't vote, no. Couldn't care, to be honest with you." A local shopkeeper, a jovial man in a striped blue apron, said cheerfully: "Haven't voted for 20 years. Wife's the same."

After a string of such responses Ms Dines was almost pleading. "You should vote," she told one woman imploringly. "Women had to fight very hard to get the vote in the first place, you know." The woman was unmoved.

In a shop, Ms Dines made her pitch to a woman shop assistant who said she supported Sinn Féin. "We are the only national party here. We want an end to sectarianism, we don't care what religion or what colour you are. The fight really should be on whether you're Conservative or socialist. I wouldn't vote on the basis of religion," said the candidate. "Neither would I," said the woman, levelly.

Each made their points, then Ms Dines bought a jar of marmalade and they parted on the best of terms, leaving one to wonder why all political discourse could not be conducted in such a civilised, gracious manner.

Flying the flag: Sarah Dines, Tory candidate for East Belfast, has won many friends but probably few votes

Photograph: Pacemaker

Ashdown plea on tactical voting

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Paddy Ashdown yesterday cautioned people against tactical voting, arguing that there was no difference between Labour and the Tories.

The Liberal Democrat leader also claimed in an interview on GMTV that over the past five years his party had moved "from a party of protest to a party of government."

He said the Liberal Democrats had beaten the Conservatives into third place in local government and, as for Labour, he said: "What does Labour stand for any longer? Mr Blair

what it is we stand for, and let people choose what they want to do according to what their priorities are.

"I think that is relying on an intelligent vote from intelligent people without pushing people around."

"I am inviting people to vote Liberal Democrat and that's the only way you get the things only we now stand for. Unhappily now, with Labour offering the same policies as the Conservatives, if Labour should be elected it would not make any difference."

Without hearing that contemptuous view, Mr Blair told the day's election press conference that there was no question of any deals being done with the Liberal Democrats after Thursday.

"I am in favour of co-operating with other parties where it is in the national interest to do so," the Labour leader said. "But I am not talking pacts, deals and all the rest of it - that's not on the agenda and never has been."

Mr Ashdown told *Election Call*: "The proposition being put equally by the Conservatives and Labour is to make two impossible promises."

"Promise number one is that in the present economic climate that you can cut taxes and promise number two is that you can maintain public services. They must tell us which of those two promises they intend to break after the election, because they are unachievable."

Mr Ashdown said: "If you want to go on actually having elections based on lies, on tax promises that are betrayed straight afterwards ... vote Labour, vote Conservative, it's not going to make any difference, we won't make the long-term investments ... and we will have a system of politics which continues to decline in respect because politicians make promises which simply can't be believed and they betray straight after the election."



may know, but I'm afraid I don't, and many people don't either. They seem to be as close to the Tory party as possible ...

"Vote Labour on Thursday, Mr Blair gets to Downing Street, you change the name on the door-plate, but not a penny extra goes into your school or hospital."

Mr Ashdown's rejection of the tactical vote against the Tories was maintained on the BBC *Election Call* programme.

"What is politics about?" he asked. "What are elections about? Elections are about voting for what you believe in. If you don't vote for it you are not going to get it."

"Our job - Mr Blair, Mr Major, myself - is to put forward clearly to the British people ...

It'll be my last visit this week - John Major, asked if yesterday's trip to Belfast would be his last

That's not grown-up talk. It's not going to happen - Roy Hattersley, denying he was in line to be Leader of the House of Lords in a Blair government

I have been trying to defend Edwina on several occasions ... I must say I find it difficult on this occasion - Kenneth Clarke on Mrs Currie's prediction of a Labour landslide

Well, I'm a polite sort of guy ... Michael Heseltine's only response to the Currie question

The general picture on all the charts is that Labour would win, but it also looks like something weird ... is going to happen on polling day - Roy Gillett, chairman

QUOTES OF THE DAY

of the Astrological Association of Great Britain

Tony Blair is claiming that the Labour Party is the Referendum Party, Brian Mawhinney says it is the Tories who will deliver a referendum ... they are lying through their teeth - Sir James Goldsmith

Nil - Sir Denis Thatcher, asked about John Major's chances of winning

This isn't a landslide country. The only poll that counts is on election day - Tony Blair

Compiled by Ben Summers

BRITAIN DESERVES BITTER

BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE BITTER

Blair warns of new threat to NHS

Anthony Bevins and
Jeremy Laurance

A big increase in private medical insurance, offering a cut-price deal for the fast-track use of NHS services, would be another step towards the destruction of the health service under a fifth-term Tory government, Tony Blair warned yesterday.

The Labour leader told a party press conference: "I fear for the future of the NHS if the

Tories get back in. Brick by brick they have been dismantling the foundations on which the NHS stands. If they win, they will have a licence to kill the NHS as we know it. They must be stopped."

Mr Blair based his attack on leaked material from a joint private medical insurance deal, under discussion between Norwich Union and the NHS trusts. He said it supported his charge that the Tories were planning "a major expansion in the use of private health insurance as part of

the two-tier NHS."

The document speaks of targeting patients who feel guilty about abandoning the NHS but who would be prepared to pay to jump the queue for treatment. It says the new private-care policy would be sold to "socially responsible dinkies [double income, no kids] and empty nesters, such as teachers, public service personnel, politically right-on professionals and your Matthew Hardings" - a reference to the millionaire chairman

of Chelsea Football Club who gave large sums to the Labour Party before he was killed in a helicopter accident last year.

The document says these people are seeking "an acceptable way to go private" who want speed of treatment but are "far less concerned about the added frills." Their objections could be overcome by convincing them that they are supporting their local hospital and making a contribution to NHS patients, it says.

Mr Blair said in response: "Unless the people of Britain use their vote on Thursday to send a Mayday warning, there will not be a National Health Service worth the name in five years' time."

Chris Smith, Labour's health spokesman, later described the arrangement as a "sweetheart deal", prompting Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, to issue a denial through Tory party headquarters. Mr Dorrell added that he

had been in touch with the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents NHS trusts and health authorities, who had told him: "I have informed the co-chairs of the NHS Confederation that, in my view, it would not be appropriate for the confederation to be involved in promoting private medical insurance."

The leaked Norwich Union document, dated 9 December last year, says the price of policies that might be offered

should be "artificially lowered to attract new business" in the first year. But it warns of a "potential backlash by the NHS Trust Federation should we need to push through high price increases in years two and three."

The NHS Trust Federation opened negotiations with several insurance companies last year to seek ways of defending its pay-bed income of over £200m a year.

Some private insurers such as

Bupa have adopted aggressive marketing tactics excluding NHS hospitals from their schemes and offering bonuses to consultants who treat private patients in non-NHS hospitals.

The federation merged last month with the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts to form the NHS Confederation. Yesterday, the confederation said any scheme involving a private provider would have to be "re-thought" after the election.



Up in the air: Three members of the Natural Law Party demonstrate Yogic Flying in London yesterday. According to its leader, Dr Geoffrey Clements, the party aims to place "health and happiness at the centre of politics" through the practice of meditation. Photograph: Brian Harris

Straight-talking right-winger reckons he will have last say

Kathy Marks on the wit and wisdom of David Evans, man of the people

The man in the battered Fiesta caught sight of David Evans, screamed to a halt and reversed back up the road. "How yer doing, gov'nor?" he yelled. The man, who turned out to be Den Cox, owner of a local fish-and-chip shop, had stopped to wish his local MP well for Thursday. Mr Cox was full of praise for Mr Evans. "He's a great man, like a gun barrel, dead straight," he said. "You don't get no pretty words from him, you get direct talk."

It is with direct talk that the colourful Conservative MP for Welwyn Hatfield has made a name. A staunch right-winger of the hanging and flogging school, he was vilified last month for an interview with a school magazine in which he sprayed abuse in several directions.

Mr Evans, 61, described Virginia Bottomley as "dead from the neck upwards", scorned female MPs generally and said his Labour opponent, Melanie Johnson, was a "single girl" with "three bastard children" who had "never done a proper job". He also referred to a "black bastard" who had been convicted of rape.

But far from damaging his prospects in Welwyn Hatfield, where boundary changes have reduced his majority to 6,500, Mr Evans's outburst appears to have boosted his popularity. As he canvassed yesterday in Mardley Heath, an affluent area on the outskirts of Welwyn, an elderly woman threw her arms around him. "I hope to heaven you get back in," she said. "You speak your mind. I wish there were more like you."

Mr Evans shows no hint of contrition. A self-made millionaire, he loves his barrow-boy image and believes that his

comments demonstrate he is a man of the people. "The voters here know what David Evans is about, so they weren't shocked. Maybe my language was a bit colourful, but I think the meat of it was what people think. For every person round here who calls me bigoted, there's another one who says: 'You were a bit out of order' and then leans forward and whispers 'But I agree with you, mate.'"

Mr Evans elaborated on his views about female MPs yesterday - they are by necessity "sub-standard", he said - and reiterated his opinion of Miss Johnson. "She lives in Cambridge with her boyfriend and three illegitimate children. I've lived here for 35 years. I'm a family man with family values. If ever there was a stark choice between two people, this is it."

Welwyn Hatfield is a barometer seat. It has never returned a Tory MP when Labour has been in power. Mr Evans said he expected to hang on.

John Redwood, for whom he was campaign manager during the leadership battle, has lent support, as has Lord Packinson. "We went into the heart of Melanie country last week," Mr Evans said. "Bandit country. I got a few mouthfuls there, I can tell you." His tirade last month at least provides a talking-point on doorsteps. "I've been your MP for 10 years and I get myself into hot water sometimes," he says by way of introduction.

The well-groomed women in the semi-detached houses of Mardley Heath are unperturbed. "I think he's just a typical man of his generation," said one. "He probably opened his mouth without thinking. My husband does it all the time."



Mr Evans door-stepping on the campaign trail yesterday. Photograph: John Lawrence

Run around the houses for would-be PM

Christian Wolmar

Tony Blair has confirmed that he will be moving into Downing Street if Labour wins the election, though it is unclear exactly where he will live in the famous street.

He has intimated to civil servants that he will be moving out of his Islington home in North London but he may delay moving for a few weeks to prepare

his family for the upheaval. However, the flat in No 10, which used to be the servants' quarters of the house, is relatively small, with four bedrooms, and much less space than the Blair's current home for him, his wife and three children. It might be possible for Mr Blair to live at No 11, which has a more spacious flat, as Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, is unmarried and has no chil-

dren. The decision by Mr Blair ends speculation that he would follow in the footsteps of Harold Wilson, the last prime minister not to live in Downing Street. During his final term of office, Wilson lived in Lord North Street. While Mr Major has lived at No 10, during the early part of his premiership his wife, Norma, remained at their home in Huntingdon.

If Downing Street is unsuit-

able, the prime minister could choose from several other government-owned flats including three at Admiralty House and the home generally occupied by the home secretary in South Eaton Place. The prime minister also has the use of Chequers, the country home in Buckinghamshire.

It also emerged yesterday that civil servants do not expect Labour to have a deputy prime

minister with extensive powers, like the current incumbent, Michael Heseltine, who has a palatial office at 70 Whitehall which houses the Cabinet Office. This suggests that John Prescott will not be taking a similar role.

Labour refused to be drawn on speculation about either Mr Prescott or Mr Blair. A spokesperson said: "We have no comment to make on this."



by Aanonymous

minus three. The big cheese interviewer was interrupting too much. These things had a delicate ecology and the Candidate - while mildly irritated at the constant heckling - knew that it was his interrogator and not him who was likely to get the blame from the listeners for yet another sterile confrontation.

Even now the duty log at Broadcasting House would be gradually filling up with the complaints of Mrs Enid Bunce of Bromsgrove and Dr Roger Rott of Rochester.

His best strategy was to check his own desire to snap back, and to stay polite. One of the things that he most admired about Saddy was the way that the small Scot would rip the occasional questioner to shreds, turning the tables in a manner that was both shocking and compelling.

One budding jock had probably had his career foreshortened by a careless accusation levelled at Saddy's comrades.

Legend had it that the young man in question had left the studio white and quivering, his bloody testicles still on the floor. Regrettably, it was not the Candidate's style. "May I just be allowed a moment to answer your question, John?" he asked politely.

What the piranhas in the upper part of the pool (the warmer water, closer to the sun) wanted was new answers. These broadsheets and up-market radio johnnies were desperate for something - anything - which would turn into a running story.

Failing that, they had to fall back on the curled lip, the ironic line and the exasperated tone, indicating to those who needed to know it - their bosses, peers and families - that they were no easy touches.

He understood their needs, but it did not much matter, the replies were always the same however cleverly the questions were couched. They lodged in various cerebral cubby holes and recesses, close enough to his mouth to be instantly available when needed. Soon enough, God willing, there would be stories for all as his new government was formed, and the Grey Man's party imploded. From now - for the next 72 hours - it was stamina that counted; the sheer bloody physical and mental toughness to keep going.

It took real effort to grind out the grins and "nice to meet you" in every single place he went. To keep on eye on whether the snappers were trying to line him up with a U-turn sign or something like that.

These broadsheet and radio johnnies were desperate for something which would turn into a story

Will power was needed not to be seduced by thoughts of what Whizz and Brother Two were doing back in London, busily making contacts and feeling their way into government. Focus! Keep going! From the interview to the press conference in the brightly coloured regional TV

studio. It seemed to be a media rule of thumb that the more primary colours a building or a newspaper was daubed in, the more essentially trivial it would be. Here, before an audience of his travelling piranhas, he engaged in a bizarre long-distance link to Mr Brown and big fish down in the capital. The disembodied voice of Uncle Herbert - for once separated from his substance - floated down the ether to accuse him jovially of complacency. Never mind. Keep going!

Thence to a midlands university to give a quick speech to 100 friendly students; keep going. Now off to the sports field, there to ask otiose royal family type questions of sceptical rugby players, most of whom seemed friendly enough (though he could

hear the inevitable nervous half-shouts of "wanker" from some of those on the fringes). Keep going.

And he was unnerved momentarily by the strange experience of hearing his own comments - made to handshakers lining his route - being amplified by the radio microphone on his tie, all for the use of the copy starved journalists in the pen. What can I usefully ask these guys about rugby? Dunno. Keep going.

On the bus and into the midlands city, a sudden pain in his guts, an appalling attack of wind. Ridiculously painful, but not an excuse to disappoint the faithful (or to create a "candidate in fatigue shock" story). Keep going!

Under the town hall and as he made his open-air address for the umpteenth time to an unusually enthusiastic crowd he looked up and spotted - on the town hall balcony - Jeremy from the BBC (who looks nothing like Jeremy from Sky TV) combing his air before performing his piece de camera. "Hell, I'm just the backdrop," thought the candidate. And kept going.

Into the helicopter and down to the London TV studios, there to be eaten by a live audience, anxious to make their minor mark on posterity or - possessed by that infuriating self righteousness with which the powerless sometimes like to get even - make a major mark on him. Never mind. Keep going.

Welsh constituency does it in threes

Tony Heath

Labour and the Liberal Democrats are slugging it out toe-to-toe in Brecon and Radnorshire, a curate's egg of a constituency boasting a history of tight three-way battles.

The major parties have all held sway there in the past 25 years. The Tory Jonathan Evans scraped in by 130 votes over the Liberal Democrat Richard Livesey in 1992 but as polling day looms a change looks highly likely.

A swing of 0.1 per cent would see Paddy Ashdown's man home. Labour needs a 4.9 per cent swing to triumph and the party's candidate, Chris Mann, points to an NOP poll for the television company HTV which puts Labour in Wales on 60 per cent, with the Tories trailing at 19 per cent, the Liberal Democrats on 9 per cent and Plaid Cymru on 12 per cent.

The pace quickened yesterday when a dozen Welsh Labour candidates - all defending majorities ranging from

5,000 to more than 20,000 - were drafted in to the Mid-Wales constituency.

They were joined by Chris Smith, the shadow health secretary, and teams were out in the three main towns of a sprawling constituency so diverse that in the south the coal mining industry is still remembered while in the north the railway station at Nighton is actually in Shropshire.

Peter Hain sits on a 23,975 majority in neighbouring Neath, which is twinned with Brecon and Radnorshire. He told shoppers in Brecon: "People who voted Liberal in 1992 ended up with a Tory MP and a Tory government. When there was a Liberal MP in the 1987 parliament he was simply ignored by the Tory government. A Labour MP backing a Labour government is the best outcome." Privately, all three parties believe they can win, but bets are being hedged. James Gibson-Wait, the Liberal Democrat agent, says cautiously: "It looks favourable, but with three days

to go funny things can happen."

Mr Evans campaigns on his record. He claims that in five years as an MP he has written over 80,000 people - and average of 43 letters a day. "I have worked to ensure that local needs are understood by the decision makers," he says.

Labour is marginally more forthcoming. Mr Mann says that 25,000 electors have been contacted. "We are on 3 per cent, with the Liberal Democrats on 32 per cent and the Tories fading at 29 per cent."

In such a close contest the votes of Plaid Cymru's Steven Cornelius and the Referendum Party's Liz Phillips could hold the key. Ms Phillips was heartened yesterday when reports trickled through of Tory posters being replaced by hers.

Labour claims to have identified 17,000 supporters enough to snatch the victory yesterday's high-profile "hit" by candidates like Ron Davies, the shadow Welsh secretary, Ann Clwyd and Rhodri Morgan was designed to make real.

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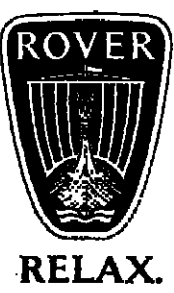
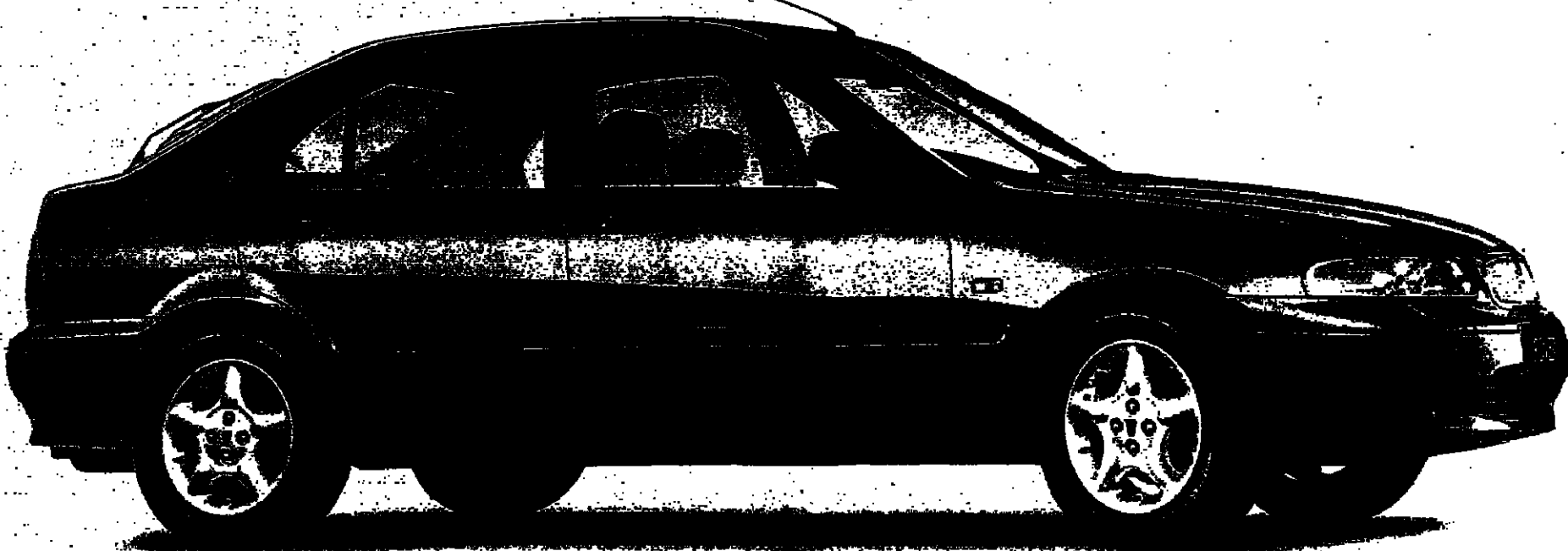
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international

Refugee crisis: As UN turns the screws on Zaire's rebel leader, troops fly out in case foreigners need to be evacuated

Pressure on Kabila to rescue lost Hutus

David Usborne
New York

The United Nations yesterday turned up the pressure on the leader of the rebel movement in Zaire, Laurent Kabila, to co-operate in repatriating tens of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees believed lost in the east of the country in conditions of exhaustion and deprivation.

The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, issued a statement welcoming a commitment made by Mr Kabila during talks with aid officials over the weekend to support the repatriation. In an attempt to place public responsibility on the rebel leader, Mr Annan said: "The entire international community are counting on that support".

The statement followed declarations from Mr Kabila at the weekend in which he gave aid agencies 60 days to complete the repatriation effort. Mr Kabila demanded an apology from Mr

Annan for earlier accusing the rebels of waging a campaign of "slow extermination" against the refugees.

Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, also spoke out yesterday after briefing the Security Council. She said she had written to Mr Kabila asking for his assurance that reports indicating the involvement of his soldiers in attacks on refugees were unfounded. She said the 60-day deadline for the repatriation campaign was "unrealistic".

Mixed news continued to emanate from the region. On the diplomatic front, the United States ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, was due to arrive in Zaire on a mission to arrange face-to-face peace talks between Mr Kabila and President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Unicef reported that up to 50 Hutu children had been abducted from a paediatric hospital run by the British aid agency,



Peace mission: America's UN ambassador Bill Richardson whispering in an aid's ear on his arrival in Kinshasa.

Photograph: AP

Save the Children, near the Zaire-Rwanda border. Who took the children was unclear. Elsewhere, aid workers celebrated locating between 5,000 and 10,000 refugees, previously thought lost or dead, on a

road leading south from the city of Kisangani. It was the abrupt disappearance last week of an estimated 85,000 Rwandan Hutus from two refugee camps outside Kisangani that prompted Mr

Annan to ring the alarm bells about a potential humanitarian disaster. The implication of his statement was that forces loyal to Mr Kabila may have abetted the tragedy and even murdered some of the refugees.

UN sources said the UN-HCR had evidence of massacres having taken place. Officials are not convinced Mr Kabila was aware of these events. Privately, they question the role in the crisis of Paul Kagame, the defence minister of Rwanda. Considered the strongman of the Tutsi regime in Rwanda, Mr Kagame has no interest in seeing Hutu refugees brought home.

The sounding of that alarm has critically altered the perception around the world of Mr Kabila, whose forces now control over half of Zaire. The fact that international opinion may be swinging against him will not be lost on the leader.

The *Washington Post* yesterday labelled Mr Kabila the "spoiler in Zaire". In an editorial, it said: "By a cruel refugee policy, Laurent Kabila, the rebel leader in Zaire, is spoiling much of the friendly reception he might otherwise hope to reap in his country and abroad for ousting Mobutu".

Mr Annan's statement yesterday was designed to force Mr Kabila to deliver on his promise made at the weekend to help aid agencies carry out the repatriation. In private, UN officials are sceptical of Mr Kabila's word, in part because of a belief that Mr Kabila has limited control over eastern Zaire and even over his own soldiers.

British beef up forces on river

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

Two hundred more British troops and three RAF C-130 Hercules transport planes were last night heading for Libreville, Gabon, from Lyneham, Wiltshire, in case they are needed to help an estimated 800 foreign nationals get out of Kinshasa, the Ministry of Defence said yesterday.

The troops will be joining 40 Royal Marines, equipped with four "rigid Raider" boats and two hovercraft, who have been on stand-by in Brazzaville to evacuate foreigners - the first time Marine hovercraft (LCACs - "Landing Craft Air Cushion Light") have been used on active service of this kind.

Specialists from the Marines, including the Special Boat Service, and from the SAS have been poised to help evacuate foreigners across the river, two miles wide at this point and which has been flowing fast because of heavy rain. The river has gently sloping sandy banks, which make it ideal for hovercraft. Recent photographs indicate a number of motorised dug-out canoes and a single elderly ferry are the only indigenous transport.

Military sources said the SBS and other Marines, who are experts in the use of small craft and inflatable boats, and would be used to evacuate VIPs, could not evacuate 800 people, and this would be the responsibility of the three Hercules.

The commander of the British forces in Zaire is Brigadier Jonathan Thomson, Royal Marines, the chief of Joint Rapid Deployment Force Operations.

Vote gives Prodi a crumb of comfort

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

Provisional results from this weekend's local elections confirmed the deep structural paralysis at the heart of Italian politics yesterday, with neither of the two main coalition blocs making significant gains over the other and small fringe parties holding enormous sway over the final outcome.

The good news for Romano Prodi's centre-left government was that it did not go down to crashing defeat, as some had predicted, after a year of weak leadership and enormous sacrifices demanded of the people in an attempt to qualify on time for the European monetary union.

But the centre-right opposition, led by the former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and the reformed neo-Fascist leader Gianfranco Fini, could claim only the most tenuous of leads, since most of the biggest prizes on offer will have to be decided in a run-off in two weeks' time.

In the big economic centres of the north, the opposition was ahead in Milan and Turin but trailing in Trieste.

The biggest gains, meanwhile, were registered by the far-left protest party Rifondazione Comunista, the group Mr Prodi has been forced to accommodate to make up a majority in the lower house of parliament but whose ideological posturings have made life hell for him.

Most of the big prizes on offer will be decided in a run-off in two weeks' time

Already yesterday the leader of Rifondazione, Fausto Bertinotti was warning that the forthcoming round of negotiations on welfare reform, which are deemed essential if Italy is to qualify for the single European currency, would only win his support if they did not entail any public spending cuts. That stance, if it is maintained, will sabotage any serious

attempts at reform and will almost certainly bring down Mr Prodi's government.

The evident paralysis is good news in one sense, since an extraordinary cross-party commission is currently drawing up changes to the constitution in an attempt to make Italy more governable. The election results might just spur them into making intelligent electoral reforms.

The big loser this weekend was another fringe party, the Northern League, whose calls for secession from the rest of Italy sealed its defeat in Milan, where it had occupied the mayor's office. The party was defeated also in a host of other northern cities and provinces.

The League's mercurial leader, Umberto Bossi, seemed unperturbed by his party's poor showing. Indeed, he positively crowed about the defeat of mayor Marco Formentini in Milan, since Mr Formentini is an outspoken opponent of secession.

Asked whom the League would support in the second round, he said the party would not even bother to campaign. "We'll send everybody off to the mountains," he said.

Rejected Slovaks accept Russian bear's embrace

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

Three days seems an unusually long time for any foreign head of government to spend in the small central European state of Slovakia. When the visitor is Russia's Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, one could be forgiven for thinking that something is afoot.

Mr Chernomyrdin, who arrived in the Slovak capital, Bratislava, yesterday, is expected to sign no fewer than 12 agreements with the Slovak government, covering trade, co-operation between the Russian and Slovak central banks, science and technology, and arms production.

The deals go some way beyond anything that Russia has agreed with other Central European countries, notably the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. They indicate that Russia regards Slovakia as its best friend in the region.



Chernomyrdin: Bringing 12 deals from Moscow

The reason for Moscow's enthusiastic interest in Slovakia is not hard to find. Alone in Central Europe, Slovakia is unlikely to receive an invitation from Nato next July to join the Atlantic alliance in 1999.

Western governments have serious doubts about the quality of Slovak democracy under its populist Prime Minister,

Vladimir Meciar, and they consequently believe that Slovakia should reform itself before earning a Nato invitation.

Russia, spotting its chance, has stepped in.

According to the Russian ambassador to Slovakia, Sergei Zotov, the Russian-Slovak arms accords could be far-reaching enough to complicate any future attempt by Slovakia and Nato to get together.

Moreover, Russia has an exceptionally strong card to play, in that Slovakia depends on the Russians for almost all its gas supplies.

However, many Slovaks are alarmed at the implications of such a close relationship with Russia. They include the head of state, President Michal Kovac, who is Mr Meciar's sworn political enemy. Liberal Slovaks would prefer to bind their country to Western institutions. The effect of Mr Meciar's policies has been to push Slovakia towards the Russian bear-hug.

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Five years on, LA remembers how war erupted on its streets

Tim Cornwell on how Angelenos have come to terms with the 1992 riots

Five years on, Charles Rachel is struggling with his memories of the Los Angeles riots. A member of Crips, one of LA's oldest neighbourhood gangs, who lost one brother to a shooting and another to jail, he works as a gang councillor on Vermont Avenue, but still flashes the gang tattoos on his arms, and talks about running with the "home boys". "I was out there, I was right in it," he said. There were shop-owners opening their doors to the looters, and setting fire to their own businesses to claim insurance. "But people really waked [sic] up to the fact of destroying their own neighbourhood. A lot of us in this generation had never been through a riot. I don't think they would do it again."

Five years ago, Vermont Avenue was a war zone. A few blocks west, at Florence and Normandie, in the late afternoon of 29 April, police retreated in the face of an enraged crowd, after the acquittals of four police officers charged with the beating of motorist Rodney King. Three days later, after the National Guard finally restored order, LA seemed to have burned itself out. Fifty-five people were dead, more than 2,500 injured. More than 1,000 buildings had been damaged or destroyed by fire, with property damage estimated at \$1bn (£625m).

LA has chosen 1997 as the year to mark the anniversary of an event that remains seared in the memories of Angelenos, far more terrifyingly than either the LA earthquake or the OJ Simpson trial that followed. People remember being trapped in a violent and burning city, desperate to get home and find family members. The riots sent a wave of people out of the city and out of the state, fueling white emigration to the north and west. But like Mr Rachel, the city seems uncertain how to commemorate the riots. The African American Unity Centre, where he works, is sponsoring a "Unity Day of Celebration", bringing together white, black, Latino, and Korean community groups to remember the "LA Civil Unrest", the politically correct usage. The Korean community was the hardest hit in the riots, with some 2,500 busi-



Gun law: A police officer attempting to stop looters in a Los Angeles store during the 1992 riots, which claimed 55 lives. Photograph: AP

nesses looted or destroyed. But even Yohngshik Choe, head of a Koreatown business association formed to liaise with the LAPD, described the riots as an opportunity to "learn a lesson" and promote positive "empowerment". He said: "At one time, we thought the riots shattered our American dream, but we are here to stay."

But a recent special screening of *Riot*, a television film, at the First African Methodist Church, provoked what the *Los Angeles Times* called an

"eruption of anger and emotion" from the racially-mixed audience. The film, based on four fictional stories from different communities, tried to be un-sentimental about the shootings and burnings. "Instead of riot, this movie should be called *Stereotype*," one viewer shouted. Rebuild Los Angeles, the private consortium set up to redevelop the worst-hit areas of the city, dissolved in January. Critics said it had come nowhere near keeping the promises that were made. In one particular

bone of contention, major supermarket chains built only a fraction of the 30 new stores that were pledged. If racial divides in the city are as sharp as ever, politically LA has the feeling of a city asleep. Like other major US cities, it has seen a sharp downturn in its crime rates, while economically California's recovery continues. Republican Mayor Richard Riordan recently won re-election in a contest that went virtually ignored. He easily defeated Democrat Assembly-

man Tom Hayden. Even the firing this spring of Willie Williams, the city's first black police chief installed in the wake of the riots, failed to galvanise much interest. Quietly, however, the political map of Los Angeles is being redrawn. The city's Latino minority, now estimated at up to 40 per cent of its population, has been going to the polling booths in record numbers. LA is becoming an increasingly Hispanic city with black political power at risk of being marginalised.

Ruling Liberals face two-way challenge

Hugh Winsor Ottawa

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's decision to call a snap election a year and a half before it is required has run into trouble before the campaign is 48 hours old. The governing Liberals called the election for 2 June because there were indications that the strong lead they have maintained in the polls since the last election was starting to fray. They wanted to nip in the bud the first indications of a Conservative Party revival.

Another major reason for the early call was to take advantage of confusion within the separatist Bloc Québécois. Since Lucien Bouchard, its founder, became premier of Quebec last year, the Bloc has no one at the federal level to match his charisma.

But Prime Minister Chrétien has already come under criticism because he was able to offer no reason other than political opportunism for calling the election at this time. Callers on radio talk shows were overwhelmingly negative yesterday. The criticism was particularly strong in Western Canada where attention is focusing on the worst flooding in 50 years in

Manitoba, and electioneering has been put on hold until the spring runoff subsides.

If the support levels registered in pre-election polls were to be maintained, the Liberals would have no trouble returning to Parliament with a strong majority, since there is no obvious alternative. The two strongest opposition parties are the Bloc, which stands only in Quebec, and Reform, which draws most of its support from the two most western provinces.

The only national opposition parties are the Conservatives—driven from power in 1993 and reduced to two seats in the House of Commons—and the centre-left New Democrats who also lost their official party status (requiring a minimum of 12 seats) in the last election.

But signs of a Conservative recovery have started to appear, mostly because of the Tories' dynamic young leader, Jean Charest. At 38—compared with Mr Chrétien's 63—he portrays himself as the leader for the 21st Century.

Although recent polls are showing modest increases for the Conservative Party as a whole, Mr Charest is outscoring the prime minister on leadership ratings, especially in Mr Chrétien's home province of

Quebec.

In the first poll since the election call, the Liberals' strategy for fighting off the Bloc Québécois seems to be working with the party moving into almost a tie in the popular vote. But with Liberal support concentrated heavily among English-speaking Canadians and immigrants, the Bloc would still win more seats.

Another reason for the early election is the need for time to prepare for what could be the final battle with the separatists in an another referendum expected next year. The Liberals

will have to offer additional concessions to offset the powerful appeal of Premier Bouchard. But those are likely to be unpopular in many parts of English-speaking Canada, so Mr Chrétien will downplay them to run on his economic record.

Budget-cutting has reduced the deficit and helped bring interest rates to their lowest levels in 35 years. The Liberals have also reduced unemployment although it still remains at 9.5 per cent of the labour force.

The Liberals' major disappointment, however, has been their failure to reduce separatist

support in Quebec. They have not recovered from the shock of the 1995 referendum in which the separatists came within one percentage point of winning.

The separatists have convinced the French-speaking majority in Quebec that Mr Chrétien is to blame for Quebec's failure to win a special constitutional status.

Mr Charest is unlikely to gain many seats in Quebec because the vote is so polarised—federalists will concentrate their support for the Liberals. But in the rest of the country, he is making a strong case that he is

a more modern, forward-looking leader than Mr Chrétien.

"The choice is whether old, complacent leaders stay the course, or we set the course," Mr Charest said in his election launch.

The Liberals are almost certain to retain power. But they will have to win a series of regional battles as well as counter Mr Charest's revival. The New Democrats will attempt to challenge the Liberals throughout the country but they have not been able to counter the rightward drift of Canadian politics over the past decade.

significant shorts

Indonesia jails 9 leftists for role in Jakarta riots

Nine Indonesian leftists convicted on subversion charges were jailed for up to 13 years yesterday for membership in the small, left-wing People's Democratic Party (PRD). PRD members arrested in the wake of riots in Jakarta last July had faced possible death sentences under Indonesia's controversial subversion law.

Only three political parties currently campaigning for the general elections on 29 May are legally recognised in Indonesia. PRD chairman Budiman Sudjatmiko, 26, was sentenced to 13 years.

Reuters - Jakarta

N. Korean poor turn cannibal

Hunger in North Korea is forcing peasants to delay burials to prevent cannibalism, and the UN's food aid agency has called for emergency help to prevent "one of the biggest humanitarian disasters of our lifetime".

In increasingly horrific reports of disaster, visitors to China's border with the Stalinist hermit state said that peasants were selling their clothes for food and were sneaking into China to steal animal feed.

Some peasants were keeping their dead at home until the corpses began to putrefy before burial as they feared the bodies would be dug up and eaten by hungry farmers, Chinese residents said.

Reuters - Peking

Disgraced banker found hanged

A former South Korean banker embroiled in a loans-for-kickbacks scandal was found hanging in his home yesterday in a suspected suicide.

Separately, a close associate of President Kim Young-sam's second son was summoned for questioning by state prosecutors, who are building a case against the younger Kim over his suspected role in the scandal.

The former banker, Park Suk-ine, was an executive director of Korea First Bank, the main creditor of troubled Hanbo Steel Corporation at the centre of the scandal. Hanbo collapsed in January under \$5.8bn (£3.6bn) in debts supplied by banks under pressure from politicians.

Reuters - Seoul

Tasmania mourns gun victims

Survivors of Tasmania's Port Arthur massacre made an emotional pilgrimage to the city yesterday, strolling among stone ruins which a year ago echoed to the crack of deadly gunfire.

They wandered around the old Port Arthur penal colony, where 35 people were killed on 28 April last year in Australia's worst mass murder in modern times.

After a public remembrance service at Port Arthur, the 100 or so survivors and relatives of the victims roamed the site, reflecting on last year's tragedy.

Reuters - Port Arthur

Beirut offers on-the-spot visas

Westerners wishing to visit Lebanon can get instant visas at Beirut airport, airport or at Lebanese border checkpoints, a government directive disclosed yesterday. The move is in line with the aim of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's government to restore Lebanon to its role as a Middle East tourist centre, which it held before the 1975-90 civil war.

AP - Beirut

Maoris at war with Spice Girls

Maori leaders are on the warpath after reports that the Spice Girls had performed a traditional Maori war dance in jest. The group infuriated Maori cultural experts by fooling around with the *Ka Mate haka*—the version of the dance used by the All Blacks rugby team to intimidate opponents—on a promotional visit to Bali last week.

"It's a denigration of a people's culture," Timoti Karutu, of the Maori Language Commission, told Wellington's *Dominion* newspaper. "It is unacceptable."

Reuters - Wellington

Yemen holds back poll results

Yemen said yesterday it was delaying the announcement of initial results in its first parliamentary elections since the 1994 civil war because high voter turnout had slowed counting.

"We are keen for accurate figures... The [first] results will be announced at noon on Tuesday [9am GMT]," Sa'eed al-Hekaimi, spokesman for the Supreme Election Committee, told a news conference.

Reuters - Sana'a

China honours Duda's big day

Duda, the world's oldest living captive giant panda, has celebrated her 35th birthday with a special dinner of milk and cake in a zoo in central China, state television said yesterday.

With a huge red bow tied around her waist, Duda slurped from a large bowl of milk while her keepers lit candles on her cake. She has lost most of her teeth and can only eat the most tender bamboo stalks. Chinese Central Television said. Pandas seldom live beyond the age of 25.

Reuters - Peking

THE World of Lily Wong

29 April 1997

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international

UN dove brings hope to desert's lost tribe



Robert Fisk
in the Sahara
witnesses the
second-coming
of Baker the
peacemaker

Wilaya Smara camp, south-west Algeria — It was a scene from the days of Empire. The people of the western Sahara clapped and ululated as the tall, square-headed, sweating, silver-haired sahib strode into their midst, the representative of the greatest power on earth. In theory, this was the United Nations. In reality, it was the United States.

"Iraq No, Morocco Yes. Why?" a billboard asked above James Baker's head. Was he not the US Secretary of State who ordered Iraq to end its occupation of Kuwait seven years ago? And would not the same James Baker, now special envoy to the UN Secretary-General, now have come to order Morocco to end its 22-year occupation of the western Sahara?

So it was that the supplicant refugees — the 140,000 Saharawis in Algeria whose Polisario guerrillas had harried the Moroccan army for 16 years until their 1991 ceasefire — stood in the desert sandstorm outside Tindouf as Mr Baker, slayer of the Iraqi army and nemesis of Saddam Hussein, arrived in majesty.

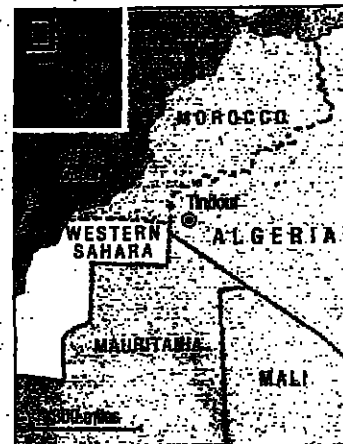
He emerged from his jeep sporting a peaked UN cap; perhaps aware that this made him look like an incongruous baseball star, he took it off within seconds.

And there, bronzed beneath the sun, stood the man who would decide their fate, he who faced down the Beast of Baghdad, a sudden flourish of his left hand freeing half a dozen white doves which fluttered above us to cries of approval from the sand-blinded masses. Many are the ageing British proconsuls sent to the far corners of Asia to adjudicate on tribal frontiers — who would have understood the gesture.

We didn't see these doves back in 1991, of course, but this was the new model James Baker, peacemaker extraordinaire. He came ready to listen — or so he repeatedly told the exiled and Ruritanian "government" of the western Sahara — to the Saharawis and Moroccans, the Algerians and, no doubt, to the United States of America.

What the Polisario want is their own independent state in the western Sahara, along with its phosphates and rich fishing grounds. But King Hassan of Morocco, Commander of the Faithful, is still offering the Saharawis only limited autonomy.

Algeria, the Polisario's tradition-



Desert welcome: A Saharawi refugee on a camel (left) chants and waves during James Baker's visit to the Smara refugee camp yesterday (Photograph: Reuters). Right: A woman and children outside their stone house (Photograph: Robert Fisk)

al supporter, does not want to give King Hassan any territorial victories, but it is now distracted by a savage internal war.

Much more to the point, King Hassan remains one of Washington's faithful allies in the Middle East. He is one of the few Arab leaders who is still on speaking terms with the Israelis now that the "peace process" — initiated way back in 1991 by a man called James Baker — is dead.

Is Mr Baker, therefore, going to support the demands of the destitute and sick refugees — people whose east European support dried up with the collapse of the Iron Curtain — against America's royal friend in Rabat?

Pathetically, the Saharawis in their blue and black robes, shrieking their welcome from the sides of the track through the desert, their ramshackle army wiping the sand from beneath their tin helmets, believed that the steel-hearted Mr Baker might be swayed by their obvious emotions.

"Surely when he sees our people like this, he will understand our suffering and our need for independence," a Polisario factotum, cowed in a black shawl, vouchsafed to us. As he spoke, a flurry of American military personnel — blue-beretted, but with very large US shoulder flashes — pushed their way through the

crowd. "Mr Baker is a powerful man — and we need a powerful man to help us," he said. Nearby another billboard proclaimed: "Mr Baker — remember Big Fish versus Small Fish."

But powerful men understand weakness as well as strength, and it was the Big Fish of Morocco who opened the Maghreb to Israel (even if it is now planning to close the Rabat-based secretariat in charge of Middle East economic summits). And it was Algeria which organised the final return of America's embassy hostages in Tehran a long decade ago.

Despite the presence of a well-maintained Russian BMP armoured vehicle — crewed by Polisario men —

close to James Baker's jeep, Algeria has no desire for a continuation of the war.

It must have come as a relief for Mr Baker when he entered the straw-roofed chamber of a stone desert house to meet the sheikhs of the Polisario's four refugee camps in south-west Algeria, the nearest the Saharawi people have come to democracy in exile.

Tired and unsmiling, he later emerged from talks with the Polisario's "president", Mohamed Abdul-Aziz, to say all the right things: that he was impressed by his welcome, that it was a tough problem but not a hopeless one — "or else I wouldn't

be here" — and that this was merely a fact-finding trip.

He welcomed the "very, very generous humanitarian gesture of support for my mission" — the release of just 85 out of 2,000 Moroccan prisoners, some of whom have been held for 21 years in the desert, by the aforesaid "president".

Then he went on to add that if the UN's own peace plan — which includes a referendum of Saharawis in Algeria and in Moroccan-ruled western Sahara, prisoner exchanges, and a reduction of troops — could not work, then he would have to advise the UN Secretary-General on "what other steps could be taken".

And there's the rub. For what is likely to have interested Mr Baker is the degree of war-weariness of a people who left their homes 22 years ago for the most arid desert in the world. Left their homes to live in heat and dust, drinking the filthiest water the UN has ever come across in its history of refugee assistance, their teeth and bones brittle from lack of vitamins and too much nitrogen in the water. War-weariness is a vital element of refugee morale.

After all, were the Palestinians not weak and war-weary when Mr Baker invited them to make peace with Israel in 1991?

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MUSIC THAT MEANS SOMETHING

Johnnie Walker

Ashdown in action makes the case for change

"Mummy, what is that man for?" If we apply the classic test to Paddy Ashdown, the answer has to be that his purpose is to open up the possibilities of British politics. It is too simple to say, as many Labour politicians do, that the Liberal Democrats enjoy the luxury of being able to adopt positions which are only capable of winning minority support. This assumes that the way to win elections is, like a boxer, to get ahead on points and then bury your head in your opponent's chest so that he cannot hit you. Tony Blair assumes that any party seriously aspiring to win a majority of seats in the House of Commons cannot, for example, advocate higher taxes to pay for better public services. If it were not for the Liberal Democrats, the middle ground of politics would be defined by a conspiracy between the two largest parties, and the election campaign would be even more stifling than it has been.

The Liberal Democrats have stretched the envelope of public debate. It may be that Labour has been forced into its hedgehog position on tax only because of its past history, and voters' distrust of it. It may be that a different tax policy could win the assent of a majority if it came from a different party. And some aspects of the Liberal Democrats' policy are commendable. There are in fact two elements. One of simple redistribution: higher income tax

on those earning more than £100,000 to cut tax for those on lower earnings. And one of honesty about public finances: higher income tax generally to pay for increased spending on education.

Using the tax system modestly to close the gap between the better-off and the poor would have been a long-overdue token of a new public ethic. And, although a penny on the standard rate of income tax is far from the best way to raise it, the Liberal Democrats are to be praised for their directness in saying that better public services have to be paid for – something Mr Blair, head down, gloves up to his face, cannot say, despite the words "Education, education, education" stitched on his banner. Mr Ashdown makes the same point ("Sp on a packet of fags") in relation to the National Health Service, which, as *The Independent* has reported in recent days, does not meet our aspirations for it, despite hugely increased real resources over the past 18 years.

Mr Blair may be right that Labour cannot win as a tax-and-spend party, but his argument is logically flawed: just because Middle Income Britain has "suffered enough" from tax rises does not mean it is wrong to put taxes up more. At least, because of Mr Ashdown, Mr Blair has been forced to try to justify himself.

In some ways, of the three national party leaders, Mr Ashdown has had the best campaign – certainly the most



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enjoyable one. Realistically, he will not be prime minister on Friday. So his role is not to play at being prime minister, but to act out the possibilities which could be encompassed by a candidate prime minister. Occasionally, the necessary pretence that he could form a government has slipped. Mr Ashdown has been teased by *The Independent's* Anthony Bevis for not knowing what was in his 1992 manifesto and by *Newsnight's* Michael Crick for not running a campaign in Meriden, which he needs to win for a Lib Dem majority in the Commons. But it has been a good performance. He has argued with passion and

clarity that every single Liberal Democrat vote will count as a vote for more resources for education and health.

Interestingly, what he has not said with anything like the same force is that every Lib Dem vote will dramatise the case for a fairer electoral system. Perhaps this is because he recognises that electoral reform is not a vote-winner. Perhaps it is because he fears that if Mr Blair is pushed on the issue, he would take an even more negative stance than simply being "not persuaded" of the case for electoral reform. Either way, it remains one of the most compelling reasons for voting Liberal Democrat. Every

additional vote for Mr Ashdown's party piles on the pressure to persuade Mr Blair that the present system disfigures our democracy, and to hold a Labour government to its pledge to consult the people in a referendum before the next general election.

Like the pledges on education and health spending, this fact also tends to appeal to anti-Conservative tactical voters. Thus Mr Ashdown has extracted every possible drop of advantage from what seemed three years ago to be an unpromising strategic position. When Mr Blair came to the Labour leadership, one of the first things he did was to launch an all-out assault on Lib Dem territory, including laying claim to the Liberal tradition of Keynes and Beveridge. For a moment it looked as if the Liberal Democrats would not survive the boxer's bear-hug. But Mr Ashdown's repositioning of his party has worked – he ended "equidistance" and robustly asserted a form of social democracy which now lies well to the left of New Labour.

This has produced a bizarre situation where most Labour Party members find their core beliefs publicly reflected better by the Lib Dems than by their own leadership. This seems to have done nothing to prevent disaffected Tories switching to the Lib Dems, while leaving Mr Ashdown's party poised to benefit from tactical voting from Labour supporters. Indeed, it is possible that the

Liberal Democrats could sweep from their Celtic fastnesses across almost the entire West Country.

It may be that what we will see on Thursday in the rest of the country will be a shallow Labour landslide, in which Mr Blair wins a substantial parliamentary mandate on a negative, anti-Tory and unenthusiastic vote. If that is the case, then the case is even stronger for as many Liberal Democrat MPs as possible to be elected, to stiffen the progressive resolve of a Blair government.

First to the lifeboats

He's still standing, bug-eyed with exhaustion, abandoned by most of his senior ministers and spin-doctors, John Major is fighting the final few days of a desperate campaign almost single-handed. We have been hard on him in the past, but this is real courage, and commands respect. What does not, though, is the spectacle of so many flatterers and sycophants who served him so enthusiastically in the good times now abandoning him to his fate – leaving him to it, while they prepare their leadership campaigns and gossip about who is to blame for the defeat. You would have thought, after all this time, they owed him more. What rats.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Consultant: why I cannot trust Tories

Sir: I was the surgeon mentioned in your front page article "The truth about health" (25 April).

The period about which Mrs Butler spoke was during a time when there were enormous changes taking place within St Helier, the hospital being among the first wave to attain trust status. There was a great deal of "restructuring", with wards being closed or moved and much insecurity among the staff.

During this time the urology ward (in common with the whole hospital) had problems recruiting and retaining staff. Because of ward closures there were bed shortages and extra beds were often put in the patients' day room (a situation which still occurs) further putting pressure on the reduced number of staff. Mrs Butler is probably right in her description of the ward at that time.

Some wards are still understaffed, although the urology ward is now well staffed and well run and is a credit to the hospital and the NHS, and this is through the dedication and hard work put in by all the ward staff.

From a personal point of view, I would say that the medical staff have a surprisingly good relationship with their managers, although there have been times when there have been major disagreements. However, together they have made St Helier a very successful trust. The hospital has done everything asked of it following the 1991 health reforms – reduced in-patient beds yet increased throughput, increased the percentage of day-surgery procedures, provided outreach clinics in franchising practices, privatised catering and cleaning services etc.

However, to enable this to occur all departments have had to make savings year-on-year and have been pared down to the bone; there is no leeway in staff numbers or facilities to cope with fluctuations due to increased emergency admissions. Morale in general is low and the trust has been dealt a severe blow by the local purchasing authority, who do not have enough money to fund the amount of elective surgery necessary to keep waiting times under a year. This has led to yet another ward closure to save money.

In my speciality, urology, the whole team has worked extremely hard to reduce waiting times to around 9 months for routine cases, but we have just been told in the new round of contracts that patients in the routine category must wait 18 months before being admitted. We are to lose another four beds on my ward. No wonder staff (and patients) get angry and frustrated with the statistics that flow out from the politicians. I do not know whether I can trust Tony Blair and a Labour government, but I do know I cannot trust John Major and another Tory government. CHRISTOPHER R JONES FRCS Consultant Urologist St Helier Hospital Corsham, Surrey

Sir: Friday's front page featured the dreadful plight of Mr and Mrs Butler who have, it seems, received appalling health care. You then went on to assume their case was typical in order to tell your readers "The truth about health". As a fellow cancer sufferer I can assure you that unlike the Butlers I have received superb care from my GP (not a fund-holder), from the staff



at the Royal Free and from the district nursing service. So what do these two stories tell us? First, that parts of the health service are very poor indeed and have to be improved. Second, that it cannot be judged on an anecdotal basis using selected cases. ADRIAN STUNGO London NW3

Sir: The "truth" about health, education, you name it, is that we, the electorate, want something for nothing. In 1993 voters blanched and voted Tory on hearing rumours of a Labour income tax increase: today neither party dare mention the words. The result will be taxation by any means except the fairest, namely income tax – and it will be our own fault. JULIA CULSHAW Uppingham, Rutland

Record what witnesses say

Sir: For a number of years my collaborator, Anthony Heaton-Armstrong, and I have been advocating the introduction of rules requiring the police to tape-record the taking of all potentially contentious witness statements. This is not generally done at present and, although Home Office guidelines rather inadequately suggest that in serious cases it may be "beneficial" to do so, there is no firm check upon what a prosecution witness actually said to the police when making a written statement.

The result is that material differences between that statement and evidence given by the witness in court later are often exploited in impugning the witness's reliability

instead of being attributed to defective transcription on the part of the officer taking the statement. It is widely accepted among criminal lawyers that this may be the single most common cause of wrongful acquittals.

We expanded on this topic in our recent article in your columns ("A sounder system", 16 April) and argued that if the parties were serious in their commitment to law and order issues they could demonstrate it through an election pledge to implement our proposal. I have since been in contact with Alan Michael, Labour police affairs spokesman, who has, I gather, consulted Gordon Brown. Understandably enough, Labour's position is that no firm pledge can be given at this stage, since there has been no opportunity to cost the measure. Happily, however, I have been informed that they agree with it in principle and, subject to examining the question of cost (or savings), intend giving it serious consideration if they win. DAVID WOLCHOVER London NW11

Loud men

Sir: I agree with Mair Gaunt (letter, 26 April) about the discomfort of high sound levels. I find that men have the sound level on the television turned up to a degree that I find impossible to tolerate – could that be due to the better hearing women have? GERALDINE O'FARRELL Welwyn, Surrey

Cuts in British knowledge

Sir: The Government's planned cuts in the funding of higher education have been curiously absent from the election debate so far. With a 30 per cent participation rate, a good proportion of families in the country are involved, so there should be an awareness of the prospects for those who would like their children to have proper educational opportunities when they reach 18.

When ministers are asked about the cuts, they usually recite: "It is perfectly reasonable for a public service to find efficiency gains of 3 per cent per year." What this government is planning for is a progressively less well supported knowledge base for this country. This they term an "efficiency gain".

Parents with 13-year-old children must expect that under current plans higher education will be worse off in five years' time by at least 15 per cent, and that this will mean larger classes, fewer current books in the libraries, worse access to computer and laboratories facilities, and so on. These difficulties for students will be exacerbated by the pressure exerted by funding models in which anything except a narrowly defined high performance in research will be rewarded by severe cuts. Professor RONALD BROWN School of Mathematics University of Wales Bangor

Science Museum Nimbys' hit back

Sir: Local residents who fear that the Science Museum's huge new Wellcome Wing will reduce the amount of daylight entering their windows are portrayed in Jonathan Glancey's article "The outer darkness" (25 April) as reactionaries standing in the way of progress. The residents of 169 Queen's Gate, described in the article as "anonymous" and living in a "grandiose block of late Victorian mansion flats", come in for particular opprobrium.

These same residents have publicly stated their support for the Wellcome Wing on several occasions. What concerns them is not that the new building will exist, but that it is oriented in such a way as to shadow their living rooms and bedrooms. They have merely asked for their right to adequate daylight to be considered. If this is Nimbyism, how would Mr Glancey describe the actions of anti-motorway protesters?

The article does not even mention the major issue. For dozens of residents in the surrounding streets, the main problem is not the Wellcome Wing but the separate industrial-style block which the museum has proposed for its new conference centre in Queen's Gate itself.

The local council has now asked the Science Museum to submit a more suitable design. To represent this as a triumph for a handful of

Luddites who are "suspicious of science" is absurd.

Jonathan Glancey should check his facts before sneering at the community spirit of ordinary people who want this multicultural part of London to remain beautiful. DAVID WICKES Chairman, 169 Queen's Gate Ltd London SW7

Out of his misery

Sir: I find it astonishing that after six and a half years as Prime Minister Mr Major seems anxious to continue in the job.

When you think of all he has had to contend with – the undoing of the poll tax fiasco, the ERM debacle, the arms-to-Iraq scandal, ministers caught with their trousers down the BSE catastrophe, the E coli disaster, the revelations about organophosphates in the Gulf, the constant sniping of the Eurosceptics – it will surely be an act of kindness if we vote him out of office on 1 May and let him have some peace and quiet. THOMAS DUNCAN Stokesley, North Yorkshire

Race winner

Sir: Rupert Cornwell's article on race (25 April) reminded me of the many times when, travelling in and out of Malaysia in the 1960s, filling in the immigration form and answering the question on race, I inserted 100 metres or a suitable variation. No one ever queried it. B T KINNESLEY Lincoln

Why not force them to vote?

Sir: Pouring scorn upon the young for their alleged lack of interest in politics ignores a larger issue of voter apathy. If polls are to be believed (hush your sniggering), then the 49 per cent commitment to vote quoted by Polly Toynbee (28 April) is higher than the turnout at most American presidential elections.

I have not seen any serious debate about making voting at a general election compulsory, as it is in Australia. I well remember my first visit to the polling booth. Poised in silence, in private, about to pass judgement on how my country was to be ruled, it was like worship at a secular altar. Now that really was "cool". A few years afterwards, a group from the University's Chinese community stood outside the Union building one morning handing out white flowers in memory of the first-time voters who died in Tiananmen Square. Poignancy of this kind makes one a committed voter. Dr NANU GREWAL Oriel College Oxford

Sir: Polly Toynbee's anger at the anger, indifference or plain stupidity of some young non-voters is welcome, if tardy. She suggests explanations: Thatcher, dumb-down yoo culture, patronising broadcasting. So what can we do? In a hi-tech, multi-media, anything-goes society it is essential that all young minds are thoroughly trained in judgement, even before work skills are imparted. Preposterous as it may seem, we shall have to start making the compulsory teaching of philosophy – in some palatable and enthralling way – a prerequisite in all schools. IAN FLINTOFF London SW6

Greens off screen

Sir: Bearing in mind the BBC's policy of virtually excluding any serious coverage of the smaller parties, the Party Election Broadcast is the single opportunity they get to present their case on national television.

The idea advocated in your leading article (28 April) of adopting the American system of paid advertising would in effect eliminate green politics from the airwaves, as we certainly could not afford prime-time advertising. We agree that attention to things like who should qualify for a broadcast, what the criteria should be and who should set them is long overdue. It is because so many minor parties are qualifying for broadcasts now that Local Election Broadcasts were scrapped – a bitter blow for the Greens, who are fielding sufficient candidates in the county council elections to meet the usual criteria. PETER BARNETT Director of Communications The Green Party London N19

New Butskellism

Sir: In the Fifties, the Keynesian-welfarist consensus between the Chancellor of the Exchequer, R A Butler, and the shadow Chancellor Hugh Gaitskell, was called Butskellism. Now both the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, and shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown are promising no tax rises and better public services. Should we call this Clownsism? TERRY MARSH Basildon, Essex

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essay

They have friends — but can they make enemies?

What is New Labour? It's a fresh, youthful leader in a crisp white shirt, evidently decent, engagingly optimistic and — even after many weeks of campaigning, still new. It is Millbank Tower, the blind-shaded symbol of sophisticated campaigning. It is Peter Mandelson's sphinx smile in the shadows. It is "traditional values in a modern setting".

It is, in sum, an opposition campaign, not a new philosophy or a blueprint for governing. Now, unless all our polled fellow citizens are compulsive, secretive liars, New Labour is on the verge of power. That means it will change. What- ever you thought New Labour meant, it is unlikely to mean in the future.

Up to now, New Labour has defined itself first and foremost as Not Old Labour. It isn't the closed shop. It isn't nationalisation. It isn't high taxes. It isn't incompetence, extremism, retreat. It isn't failure, failure, failure. Instead, it is an electable repudiation of the past. (And how.)

In government, however, Old Labour becomes a meaningless adversary. It is yesterday's enemy. Yes, there will be left-wing rebels. Yes, there will be trade union try-ons, upon which Tony Blair will trample easily and cheerfully. But there will not be a leftist economic and social programme, in opposition to which Blair can constantly define himself as new, fresh, different. How could there be? He himself has killed it.

In government, it isn't exciting or novel to be pro-business: it becomes a question of which businesses you are pro, and how. In government, prudent fiscal policy isn't something for interviewers and floating voters, but a painful and bruising monthly struggle. In government, being "patriotically pro-European" doesn't help you much when it comes to hard negotiating choices.

In government, the wizard campaigning and the tight central control of the Leader of the Opposition's Office, become redundant. All those gleaming Millbank computers instantly become as useful as the last war's fighters. New Labour may have been a brilliant way of stopping the Conservatives getting away with it again. It has not yet become a way of governing.

What will happen when it does? One way of looking at the Blair project today is to compare it to the state of Margaret Thatcher's party and project in 1979. There are similarities: she came in, looking new and surprising (a woman, after all) during a wave of revulsion and boredom with the old Labour establishment. We did not know quite what she was up to. She was surrounded by shadowy thinkers and policy wonks. Thatcher then had about as much respect for

New Labour has widened its appeal by turning its back on the past and limiting its goals. But in government, says Andrew Marr, it will need to confront bigger tasks and greater foes

the Heath and Macmillan-era Tory party as Blair has for the late Eric Heffer. Like Blair, her ideas were not fully formed in 1979. Thatcherism evolved in power, as Margaret Thatcher's character and ideology seized the opportunities.

This Thatcher comparison is one that Blair's people quite like. Most of them grew up during the Thatcher era and it is hardly surprising, perhaps, that her memory is invoked as a model for strong leadership, if nothing else.

For that reason, it is worth analysing the lessons of Thatcher's radical Toryism. The big lesson is obvious — that successful governments need a clear sense of leadership and a deliverable agenda. Thatcher may not have known how she was going to liberalise, deregulate Britain, but she knew that was what she wanted to do.

There is no doubt who is in charge of New Labour. But what does it want to do? Actually, we know a lot. It has clear policy pledges on school class sizes; getting 250,000 young unemployed people into training and work; fast-track punishment for young criminals and improvements to the health service. These, alongside the constitutional promises, give the party's position a clarity that the Conservatives lacked in 1979.

This means we can judge Blair, at least partly, by whether he delivers on a limited number of plausible, realistic and specific promises. Given the cynicism about politics now, it is hard to overstate the possible importance of this. Imagine feeling that voting gave you a contract with government, which ministers then actually delivered. Imagine an election in 2002 during which we were able to compare his performance with his original guarantee.

This could be one way of reconnecting the unplugged democracy. Labour's gimmicky-looking pledge card could, if things worked out, be a kind of grand anti-cynicism campaign. If the classes were sorted out, the reforms accomplished and the health service recognisably improved, that would be a fool-proof indication of success.

Blair's pledge list is a relatively modest one, and certainly less than a full five-year programme. What else would New Labour do? That will partly depend on what confronts it. The first Thatcher term, after all, was mostly shaped by the way in which she exploited events and challenges — stumbling on privatisation, smashing the miners, confronting the French and Germans over Britain's EC budget contribution.

There was a shape to her reactions because she had a project, a sense of direction. So what is the project, the bigger idea, to which Blair will be able to refer when crises (which are, in politics, opportunities) occur?

"Traditional values in a modern setting," Yesterday he called those "a fair deal, social justice". Excellent. But how do you keep pushing social justice forward when the windfall tax has been spent, and Gordon Brown is lashed to stern macro-economic positions inherited from the Conservatives, and it is an unforgiving world out there?

After all, Blair's comfortable "modern setting" includes global pressure on tax rates and regulation; fierce competition between labour markets; and fast punishment for devaluers.

Part of the unspoken bargain voters will be making with Blair is that he, Brown, Robin Cook and the others will do their best; that when hard choices come, they will remember the bottom dog. That would be very welcome. It's what this country needs. But it will still be, in essence, a defensive response, far removed from the political blitzkrieg of Thatcherism.

Put it another way: she knew who her enemies were, and she knew she could beat them. A persistent niggle about New Labour is that it has no enemies, except for a few oafs at Conservative Central Office, and some reassuringly vague abstract nouns such as "pessimism" and "despair". Blair's embrace can seem implausibly wide: his is a coalition in which lions snuggle down with lambs, ancient foes are reconciled and a smooth surface of freshly laid optimism blankets old wounds.

I hope that part of the answer is that Labour would tackle excessive concentrations of power — at home, in Brussels, in the City and so on. That requires a willingness to pick fights with powerful players, real, rising forces in society. Blair's harshest critics will laugh. Yet he has been electioneering, not governing, and maybe different rules apply. Certainly, the Thatcher parallel reminds us of the importance of doing things in power. And that means making enemies.

Lost in translation west of Slough

People with very unusual jobs indeed.

No 71: A man who subtitles films in West Country dialect.

"I was bilingual when I was at school. I spoke English and I spoke the local West Country dialect. They tried to beat the West Country dialect out of me but now at last I am putting it to good use."

The speaker is Brian Ackhead, who must be the only person in the world who is paid to subtitle films in West Country dialect. He does this for local film societies, for TV companies who are trying to pitch for a regional franchise in the West, for film preservation societies and for West Country folk societies who would rather watch, say, *Gone With The Wind* or *Key Largo* in a local dialect. (*Key Largo* is, in fact, known as *Key Largo* in the Bristol area, in accordance with the local habit of putting the letter "l" after final vowels. Other Bristol titles include *Last Tango in Paris* and *Cat Ballou*.)

"We have all been brainwashed into believing that American is the basic

dialect of the English-speaking world. We all understand the way Americans speak in films, though it is rather a different matter if you actually go to America. But we forget that it doesn't work the other way round. Americans on the whole do not understand the way we British talk. The reason that they wanted to remake things like *Till Death Do Us Part* for American TV was not so much that they wanted to tone it down a bit, as that they couldn't understand a word Alf Garnett was saying.

Americans sometimes subtitle their own films, especially when it is black ghetto dialogue. They sometimes subtitle British films. So why shouldn't we subtitle American films in West Country dialect?"

Yes, but ... "I'll give you another example. The Scottish accent. Now, although I am British I find it difficult to understand a Glaswegian. Imagine how hard an American would find it. In fact, there is a well-authenticated story that when Bill Forsyth was trying



Miles Kingston

to get Burt Lancaster to agree to act in *Local Hero*, he took him out to lunch to soft-talk him into the role, and a friend asked Burt Lancaster afterwards how they had got on, and Burt Lancaster said, 'I don't know — I couldn't understand a word Forsyth said.' So you see, we don't understand each other any better, do we?"

Yes, but ... "Of course, you will turn round to me and say, quite rightly, 'Yes, but what is a West Country dialect? Is it Wiltshire? Is it Devon? Is it

Bristolian?' Well, I haven't quite frankly got time to be too pedantic about that. Once you start looking at grassroots, you can find infinite differences. I mean, Bristol and Bath are only 15 miles apart, but you can quite easily distinguish the different ways the respective inhabitants speak. Now, I'm not going to go subtitling films in a different way for Bath and Bristol, so what I've got to do is find a generalised sort of Western way of speaking."

Yes, but ... "I know what you're going to say. You're going to say: 'Where does the West Country start? Where do you leave Middle England and enter the West Country?' Well, it's a problem. Coming from London you pass signs saying 'Slough And The West', and you know very well when you are going to enter Slough but they never tell you when you get to the West. Nor, if you are going back to London, do you ever pass signs saying 'Slough and the East'. As a result, I have to generalise a bit, which means my subtitles might

end up looking a bit Marlboro'-handed." Pardon? "I'm glad you noticed that. It's an old word I'm trying to revive. Trouble is, most dialect words have died out by now, so I see it as my job to go through the archives and select the best for revival. One word I found in an old Wiltshire glossary was 'Marlboro'-handed', meaning 'cack-handed', on the grounds that the people of Marlborough were notoriously unhandy and clumsy. Well, that not only revives an old local prejudice, it also revives an old local word, and the more of them the better."

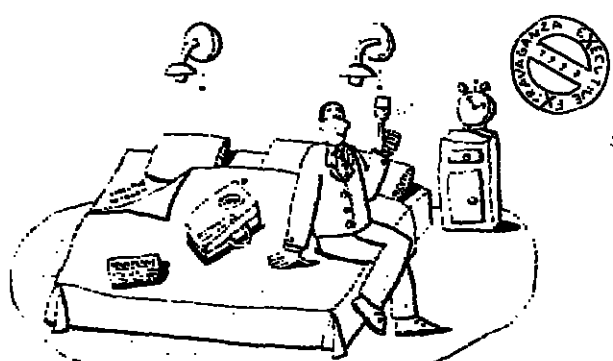
Yes, but ... "I know what you're going to say. You're going to say, if I think West Country dialect is so important, why don't I talk it? Why do I speak in this horrible Radio 4 voice? And the answer is, because you wouldn't understand I if I talked West Country."

Yes, but ... Next in our series, *People With Very Unusual Jobs Indeed — A Man Who Records the Wounded And Dying Noises for Sega Games ...*



Blair's pledge list is a relatively modest one, and certainly less than a full five-year programme. What else would New Labour do?

Photomontage: Mark Heyman



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Even before they lose, the Tory knives are out

The blaming has already begun. So far it is confined to a few bad headlines about differences between the Tory party chairman Brian Mawhinney and Lord Sanchi over the running of the Tory campaign. That is real enough. But it is trivial compared with what will happen, if the polls are even half right, in the early hours of Friday.

We can expect blame for a Tory defeat to be doled out on a much grander scale than a bit of tactical infighting in Central Office over who vetoed what advertisement in a campaign which, if it is lost, was probably lost six months ago or more.

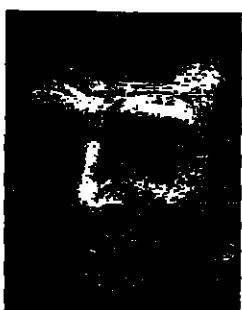
The running, televised, inquest on why the Tories lost will take on, inevitably, the flavour of Labour post-1979. As in 1979, it will be mainly (though not exclusively) centred on the post-defeat leadership campaign. Part of being in politics, except for a handful of the most detached and far sighted of its practitioners, is parading the belief that your party would always be in power if it played its cards properly.

And so the right, ignoring the fact that there was no reason but dogma for ruling out the single currency before it was necessary, will blame first Ken Clarke for insisting on keeping the issue open, and then John Major for letting him do it. The left will argue that it was the disloyalty and divisiveness of ideologically obsessed right-wing backbenchers that cost the Tories their support over the parliament. The left will have much the stronger case, but will be in a minority.

Just how small a minority cannot yet be certain, of course. It is possible to exaggerate the undoubted rightward shift there will be in the Conservative Party after Thursday. The committed left will certainly outnumber the committed right and centre-left in almost any electoral outcome. But it will not overwhelm the party. That does not undermine the argument that a seriously Euro-sceptic right-winger has the best chance of winning. But it does mean that even a right-winger will have to have some appeal to the left. A *fortiori* it means that Michael Heseltine will have to appeal to the right if he is to have a chance. As his authorship of the famous Blair-on-Kohl's-knee advertisement might just help him to do.

Forecasters, of course, are a mug's game. Few would have predicted, at this stage before polling day in October 1994, Margaret Thatcher as the next leader. But let us make some rash assumptions. One is that the party will not this time opt for someone like John Major who appeals to all sides from the middle: it will have been there, done that. Which would be bad news for Ian Lang (always supposing he keeps his seat) and Gillian Shepherd. And for Stephen Dorrell and Malcolm Rifkind, clever, and by no means friendly, men who by trimming to the prevailing mood have alienated the left without convincing the right. That is one reason why Clarke could run without being humiliated.

Mr Major's timing could be crucial. He might, especially if Labour wins by a landslide, step down straight away. Norma Major, for one, might well want him to be shot of his party at the earliest opportunity. And it would free



Donald Macintyre

A right-winger will still need to appeal across the spectrum. William Hague could fit the bill

him of the uncomfortable role of presiding over a shadow cabinet several of whose most prominent members are taking part in a leadership contest in which his own stewardship of the party will be an issue.

One quite widespread assumption in the party is nevertheless that Major will announce by the weekend that he is standing down, but will soldier on until June, allowing a leadership contest by the summer. Secondly, there will be kingmakers as well as candidates on the right, for example, whoever Peter Lilley supports will have great influence because, while he might just stand himself, he is widely seen on the right as the most desirable chancellor-in-waiting.

John Redwood, freed of cabinet responsibility, has been able to campaign semi-permanently. But has it helped? Michael Portillo, William Hague and Michael Howard can all argue that Redwood was disloyal in ways that they have not been. And all of them presently look to be more plausible candidates of the right than Redwood. Portillo probably has the edge in excitement and youth to pit against Tony Blair. He has been uncompromisingly a man of the right. I would not be amazed if a mainstream, even leftish, MP like Tim Yeo backed him. But he will need time to broaden his appeal.

Of the right-wingers Hague is the one with most natural appeal across the spectrum. My guess is that his ministerial supporters could range as widely as James Pate, James Arbuthnot, Andrew Mitchell and Sir George Young. And that he will run.

We should not exaggerate the importance of the coming Tory leadership campaign. It is as if these people have been so much the warp and woof of Britain that we cannot stop taking an unhealthy interest in what happens to them. We let alone the Tories – are still unprepared for the culture shock which a new government will mean. What will matter most from 2 May and then for months, even years to come, is what sort of government Blair runs, not who is in charge of an opposition party which could be denied office for two terms or even more.

But we should not underestimate it either. For the Tories will still have the capacity to move the political market. Especially on Europe. To take one example, a Tory party led by an uncompromising opponent of the single currency will make it that much unlikely that Blair will risk a referendum on EMU.

It remains to be seen how far a first-ballot competition between the right-wingers will itself shift the candidates to the right. In the heat of what amounts to a right-wing primary will the candidates be able to resist ruling out the single currency for all time rather than just for the next parliament? And will that make a future Tory election victory more likely? Or merely risk making Labour the party of big business and propelling Clarke to the back-benches as the leader of a dangerous "Peelite" tendency.

Clarke is the man Labour would most fear. But the candidates face the familiar problem of the Anglo-Saxon political right. How to be right wing enough to win the party but not too right wing to lose the country. It is a job description that would fit William Hague rather well.

Heaney's bog? Greeks don't have a word for it

by Ruth Padel

I meet Kazantzakis's god-daughter in Kolonaki, Athens. Katerina Angelakiki-Rooke is a well-known poet I last saw at a round-table workshop when she, I and Glyn Maxwell discovered deep rifts between Greek and British poetry. Now there are raucous café greetings. My daughter (grown-up talk, boring, in Greek, double-boring) sinks disgusted into *Treasure Island*. Fearless mum, dragging Girl Power through Athens with an improving book.

Katerina has just translated Heaney. Greeks often feel affinity with Ireland – something to do with rural life, religion and diaspora. "We know we're bringing up our children in this lovely place to leave it," said a Galway mother to me. Any Greek mum away from the city knows the same. Both countries became independent through unforgettable bloodshed, and the scars of civil war still throb. Feeling marginal and small, both secretly know they're at the centre of everything, and celebrate all this in songs that go back to masculine heroism and ancient gold.

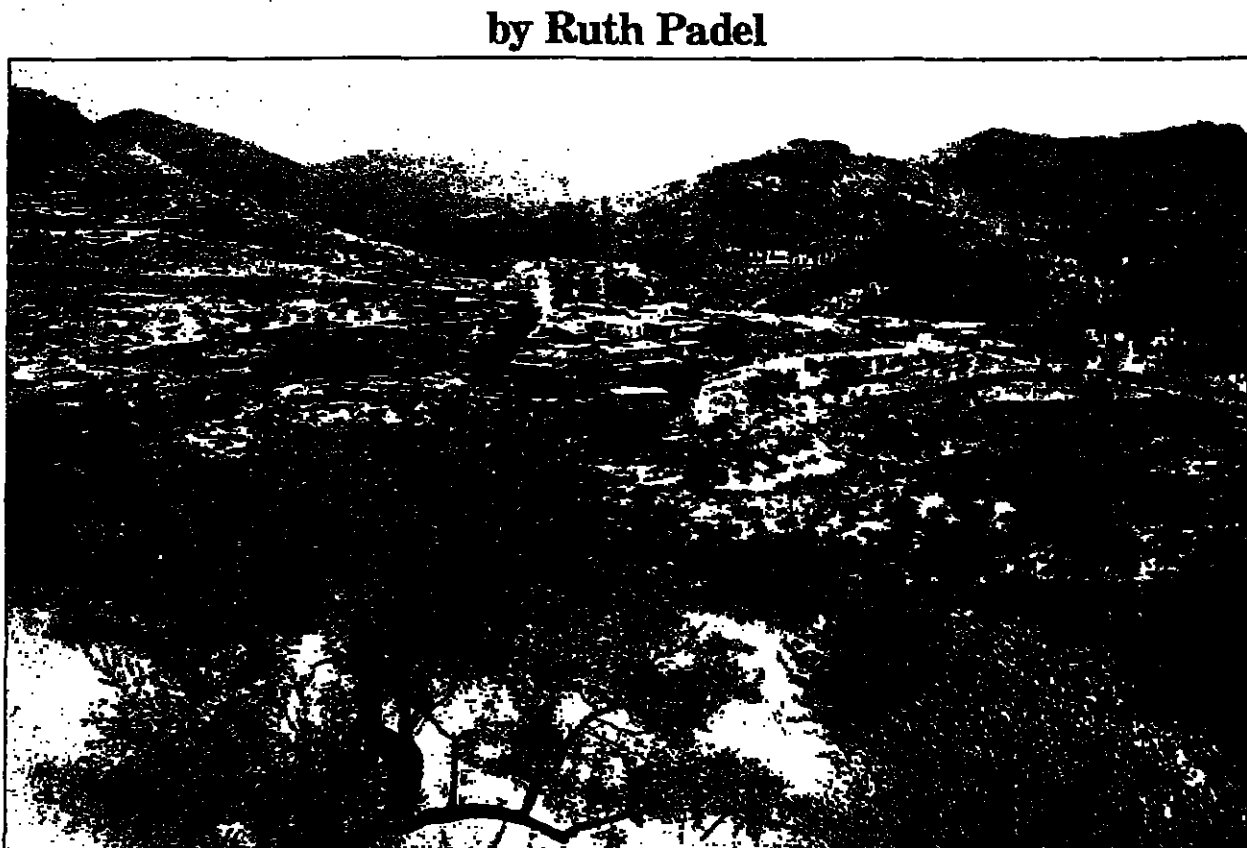
Katerina, was it fun translating Heaney? A lot in common, Greece and Ireland? "Yes, but not for me. For me, the bog doesn't exist. Bog is a wet place with mosquitoes. How can Greek translate 'bog people'?" She laughs uproariously at Greek untranslatability. "And Heaney's language always chooses the monosyllabic word. All monosyllables!" she shouts, banging the table as if just let out of a monosyllabic Dartmoor.

Fashionable Kolonaki looks round, checking out ozo levels. "I was in a lot of trouble. You know how monosyllables go in Greek. I made my own selection, chose what I liked. Then they came..." She shifts conspiratorially. A sinister helplessness, straight from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, swarms about us. *Treasure Island* gets looked up from, momentarily.

"They came to interview me for my translation?" (Bastards, I mummur.) "I said 'No! Read a poem! Read Heaney!'"

How do poets live here? In England we do workshops, review books... "Poets are lawyers," she says. "And," below John Chioles from the next table. "One's a psychiatrist. He works as a psychiatrist in the evenings."

Amazing jobs, by our standards. Mike Donaghy got work showing tourists round Highgate cemetery but it didn't last long. Poets in England with regular jobs are probation officers, primary school teachers, the odd literary editor or publisher. Mainly they scrape away freelance, doing readings. "We don't have this readings' habit. There aren't any. Women poets



'We know we're bringing up our children in this lovely place to leave it,' a lament of Greek and Irish mothers

Ireland and Greece have much in common – rural life, religion, diaspora. But poetry about wet places doesn't travel easily

live by translating – women translate, the men relate. Funny way round, isn't it?"

Do I suffer gender warfare? I ponder certain divisions (masculine metrics versus female openness) some people see in British poets. "When I started 40 years ago," says Katerina, "I was 16. Women's poetry wasn't anywhere. Now it's quite different. We have a lot of good women, maybe more than 50."

She suddenly quotes George Steiner on the personality of languages. "He says English is 'created to conceal'. You can't know if the poet's in love with a man or woman! You can't do that in any other language!" (I remember a Cambridge philosopher, an incorrigible seducer now deceased, saying: "Ruth, I've quoted Auden's 'Lay your sleeping head my love' to so many women: I was horrified when I found it was written to a man.") Tough. People who exploit poems get what's coming. "Poetically," says Katerina, "the possibility is immense. English is a language of hiding and form."

And Greek poetry, now? "Modern Greek poetry came from surrealism. Surrealism is

Mediterranean. It suits us. Gave us freedom. Connecting things in a rational way is useless in Greece. Life and poetry – nothing is connected." I disagree; but I'm only Mediterranean part-time.

Your godfather Kazantzakis he wanted to connect things, didn't he? Did you learn much from him? "Last time I saw him I was seven. When I was two and a half I asked him, 'Do you love me?' He said 'yes'. I said, 'If you love me properly let's get under the bedclothes!' My mother took some years to tell me that."

Preconscious lot, surrealists. What are you writing now, Katerina? "Last year I had two books out. One was a long poem, already translated into five or six languages. A Russian woman who knew some Greek came with a translation: I got the incredible feeling the poem was originally written in Russian."

Katerina knows Russian. Of course. Her father taught her when she was six. One vital difference between Greek and British writers is that in Britain the job requirements don't include other languages. Greeks take them for granted.

I move daughter and self to

Delphi and prose. Kay Cicellis is a diaspora Greek from Marseille. Her first languages were French and English. She used to run Athens' most cosmopolitan restaurant. Her first novels were written in English when she worked for the BBC. She remembers skiing in the Cairngorms ("Ruth – the porridge!") and wrote her first Greek piece during the 1967-74 junta, to show solidarity with the resistance.

"Greek writers are obsessed with how small their language is," she says. We huddle above the Delphic valley feeling pretty small ourselves, the world's most spellbinding view smothered in snowstorm.

Why does Greek writing not travel much, Kay? She looks sourly at the landscape. The last thing she wanted was to exchange Athens and good food for blizzards and bad hotels. "We're introspective. We have moved away from modernism at last, and there are new themes

in the Greek novel: action rather than stream of consciousness. But our novelists don't address the wider world."

Greece has best-sellers for the first time, but they are best-sellers for Greece – as, now, with film. A recent hit was *The Cow's Orgasm*: village teenagers and sex, a transferred sitcom addressing Greek taboos. A lousy film, but seen here as frank.

Did the junta hinder Greece? "No," says Kay. "They put us on the map. That film Z... It was afterwards we didn't go anywhere. Greeks are terrified of Greekness being corrupted. They seem to have lost the ability to be both Greek and citizens of the world."

Where to hear poets, since you're not living in Athens? Don Paterson and Roddy Lumsden, *Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh*; 30 April (0131 220 43 49). Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes, *Clarendon Centre, Brighton*; 8 May (01273 700 705).

Andrew Motion, *Old Operating Theatre, London*; 8 May (0171 955 4791). Sarah Maguire, *Voice Box, Royal Festival Hall*; 13 May (0171 960 4242). Greek poets: contact Hellenic Centre, 16 Paddington Street, London W1 (0171 857 5060).

Tatton's unique and cruel choice



Andreas Whittam Smith

If Mr Hamilton loses, he will be ruined. If Martin Bell wins, he will enjoy a most unusual kind of freedom

In standing for Parliament in Tatton against Neil Hamilton, the Tory MP fighting allegations of corruption, Martin Bell, the white knight in the white suit, former TV war reporter, has two tasks to accomplish. First he has to win. But if he does, he will then have to create from scratch the entire notion of being an independent Member. The species vanished from Westminster with the abolition of the Oxford and Cambridge university seats soon after the war.

In the election itself, Mr Bell has some difficulties to overcome. Mr Hamilton states in his election address: "All I ask is the right to be regarded as innocent unless proven guilty." This is always a powerful appeal. It has the resonance of a venerable principle of law. It speaks to people's sense of fair play. However, Conservative supporters, in financing the distribution of a long interview which Mr Hamilton did with the local paper, the *Knutsford Guardian*, to 36,000 homes in the constituency, appear inadvertently to have weakened the force of the plea.

For in the article, which Mr Hamilton has marked as copyright, is raised – and answered, generally with a denial, – the candidate's satisfaction. Moreover, those electors who did not receive the off-print may well have seen the original piece in the newspaper. And some others will have read elements of Mr Hamilton's evidence to the parliamentary inquiry, which *The Sunday Telegraph* recently carried. In sum, therefore, the electors of Tatton have been put into a position to make up their minds about their candidate's likely guilt or innocence. On Thursday a rough and ready justice will be done.

A second problem is found in the opposite direction. Quite a number of Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters resent their candidates' having stood down in favour of Mr Bell. As one woman asked in the local newspaper: "Why do we need Martin Bell to stand



Martin Bell canvassing in Wilmslow, Cheshire yesterday

News Team

as an independent candidate? Are the Labour and Liberal parties corrupt?" And she added: "It does not bode well for the future of Britain that both these parties felt that their candidate could not stand up to Neil Hamilton." Her feelings are understandable. But it would probably need tactical voting on a massive and unprecedented scale to unseat the incumbent. There is also a bit of irritation at the way Mr Bell was, so to speak, parachuted into the constituency at the last moment. And there is resentment that national newspapers and television appear to be telling Tatton electors that this is what they should do and this is whom they should choose.

However, Mr Bell is able to benefit from a deeper and more persistent resentment, evident in Tatton and across the country: disillusion with the system itself. He has found that the demand for clean politics shades into a desire for looser party structures. While the national turnout in the general election may be down by some percentage points, this is unlikely to be the case in Tatton.

There, for every Labour or Liberal Democrat supporter who feels disenfranchised by the absence of their candidate, one can find many more, especially the young, who are keen to vote for some kind of fresh start at Westminster. On the streets of the constituency, as I walked with Mr Bell, a passing motorist wound down her window to wish him the best of luck. Non-Tory voters, rather than despairingly contemplating the sheer size of Mr Hamilton's majority, the fourth safest Conservative constituency in the country, at last feel their votes will count for something. For Mr Bell puts first the concept of trust and honour. "I am standing primarily on the issue of trust," he writes in his election address.

Against such an opponent Mr Hamilton is plainly at a loss. He has had a few public meetings and tried some sporadic canvassing, but other than that he is scarcely seen in the constituency. The relentless attention of the media has had a dire effect. He has described what he has done to the health and morale of him and his wife: "There have been many tears

and much emotional distress... you really cannot understand what it is like... to wake up in the morning dreading to see the front pages or to turn on the radio... to go to bed at night with fear gripping your stomach." So he finds himself fighting a general election with the least appropriate of weapons: solicitors' letters and legal threats.

Mr Hamilton may well lose on Thursday; the local opinion polls indicate as much. In which case the tragedy of his political career, the centre of his life since he was at university in Wales in the late Sixties, will have come close to its final stages. He was forced to resign as a minister in 1994; he will have thrown away a safe seat; he will not find it easy to re-establish his career as a tax barrister; he appears to have few financial reserves; he will still have to await the findings of Sir Gordon Downey on the question of whether he had been paid to ask questions in Parliament. If the finding is adverse, he will be comprehensively ruined. At 48, the career of the brilliant, ambitious, hard-working son of a modest family (both his grandfathers were coalminers in South Wales, and his father was a mining engineer) will have ended.

Martin Bell, on the other hand, if he were to win, would confront one of the most interesting challenges in public life – how to be an independent MP in a party of one, yourself, and not be ground into insignificance by the big machines. Even the shape of the chamber of the House of Commons is hostile to such a venture; the two main parties aggressively face each other, rather than sit in a semicircle. At least Mr Bell could engage in meaningful discussion with his constituents on the big issues of the day. He could ask them what they thought, rather than having to explain an existing line. He would address the House of Commons with unusual authority and his constituents would feel that they were really participating. What an unusual thing!

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Bunny Roger

Erstwhile courtier, wit, dandy, landowner, and social ornament, Bunny Roger was what obituary in its oblique days styled a lifelong bachelor and what gossip columnists knew as a flamboyant homosexual.

Not that the phraseology of old Fleet Street would have distressed him: he was nothing if not implacably conservative and as the last of a kind he could scarcely expect new labels. Equally, the Queen's English (like anything else remotely royal) deserved veneration and there was one term he always resisted: "You can't call queer my gay." Apart from anything else, they're all so miserable. The Greeks were more accurate when they called the Furies the "Kindly Ones".

Yet Bunny himself – so styled from infancy when his nanny imagined a likeness – was far from morose. As the second of Sir Alexander and Lady Roger's three sons he determined precociously to wrest parental attention from his better-placed siblings and all his life he retained a showman's resilience, an enthusiasm's energy and a conviction that life is what one makes it.

His father was a City tycoon, self-made, Aberdeen, a magnate in international telecommunications, while his mother, also Scotch, was an extravaganza whose portrait by William Acton later surveyed Roger's drawing-room. What they can have been thinking when they gave their six-year-old middle son a fairy's costume of filmy skirts and butterfly wings, with the promise of a wand to further his caperings, it is hard to imagine; but the Rogers were a happy family and by the early Thirties, the Depression notwithstanding, they were also a wealthy one, and lived in opulence at Ewhurst

Park in Hampshire as tenants of the Duke of Wellington.

Following a miserable schooling at Loretto outside Edinburgh, Roger read History at Balliol under F.F. Urquhart. "The Sligger" celebrated Alpine reading parties failed to entice, and Roger instead joined Ouds (thereby meeting his life-long friend Terence Rattigan) and danced the Charleston with any compliant Rugby Blue.

After a year, determined on a career designing clothes, he left Balliol for drawing classes at the Ruskin. Rouge and hair dye enlivened his prettiness and soon he passed as an unthreatening sweetheart among the virgins, girl-shy undergraduates. Osbert Lancaster presented him with a puke-pink puppy; others pressed more unequivocal suits; but the authorities were watching and Roger was summoned before a domish tribunal, accused of corrupting homosexual activities and banished from Oxford.

America he found disappointing and disenchantment was compounded when in Hollywood he was likened to the young George Arliss and not the next Marlene Dietrich. He crossed Hitler's Germany in one of his father's Rolls-Royces to visit a cousin in Poland. He frequented London parties (although stories that he and his brothers attended a Chelsea Arts Club ball as the Brontë sisters were apocryphal). He befriended and patronised the young Edward Burra. As an assistant in the studio at Waring and Gillow he helped furnish King Zog's palaces; later, at Fortnum's tailoring, he learnt about costing and cutting.

Finally, with encouragement and advice from Edward Molyneux and Victor Stiebel and £1,000 backing from his father,

he opened his own dress-making establishment, Neil Roger, in Great Newport Street in 1937. The showroom was decorated in Regency Gothic and for his first collection Roger invited everyone mentioned in the current *Tatler* and disguised his boldness by crawling across each invitation the fictitious assurance, "Mary asked me to send you this". He numbered among his clients the Lygon sisters, Vivien Leigh and Princess Marina.

During the Second World War, conspicuously rouged in the Rifle Brigade, he saw active service in Italy and North Africa and after being demobbed he set up a new establishment in Bruton Mews before being invited to run the couture department at Fortnum's. Presently, with his friend Hardy Amies financially precarious, he invested a generous sum in the House of Amies and for a while operated from there. His investment was handsomely vindicated when Debenhams acquired his holding and he retired in 1973.

Besides, party-giving, which happily combined Roger's passions for dancing and dressing up, had long constituted a second vocation. With his younger brother Stanley he had moved in 1946 to Wandoo Street and their large house, with its basement murals depicting a Highland Garden of Eden, soon became a celebrated, if louche, nocturnal destination. Their 1952 *Quo Vadis?* party, with no address supplied on the invitation, saw Bunny Roger scantily clad for slavery. The year 1953 marked the Coronation Ball, with its host bejewelled as Queen Alexandra, and 1956 the notorious Fetish Party, which provoked full-page dismay in the *People*. In their day these extravaganzas were outrageous; and even

at the Diamond, Amethyst and Flame Balls, given to celebrate his 60th, 70th and 80th birthdays, Roger outshone and out-danced his guests from the worlds of theatre and fashion.

He dispensed sedate hospitality at Dumdonnell, the estate in Wester Ross he shared with his brothers. A phenomenon of energy, even in his eighties, he interjected his constant cooking, talking and card-playing to show guests the famous Chinese gardens created by his brother Alan or to don yet another astonishing suit. He was, after all, a Savile Row institution and his 150 suits catered, albeit theatrically, for every contingency.

He invented the tight-cut Capri trousers while on holiday on the island in 1949 and by the Fifties he was sponsoring a neo-Edwardian silhouette – four-button jackets with generous shoulders and mean waists, lapelled waistcoats, high-cut trousers – for plain, checked and striped suits. Accessories, whether a high-crowned bowler or ruby cuff-links, were indispensable; and even in his eighties the final effect, with Roger's eight-stone frame and white, much-lifted face turned vain singularity to artistry.

All dandies need an audience but Bunny Roger inspired what almost amounted to a following partly because of word and deed he never stopped entertaining; partly because we are all nostalgic for style. Most crucially, however, he was true: beneath his mauve mannerisms he was stalwart, frank, dependable and unafraid; to outlookers a passing peacock, to intimates a life enhancer and exemplary friend.

Clive Fisher

Neil Munroe ("Bunny") Roger, couturier: born London 9 June 1911; died London 27 April 1997.



Outrageous: Roger at his Amethyst Ball, 1981. Photograph: Rex

Churton Fairman

When Radio 1 celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1992 one of the launch disc jockeys could not be found.

The once well-known voice of Mike Raven had been included among the Sixties' Sounds available on headphones at the Royal Academy's Pop Art exhibition but there were rumours that he was dead. Someone making a personal appearance as Mike Raven was exposed as a fraud. Eventually a Radio 1 appeal for his real whereabouts was heard by a butcher in Cornwall who revealed that Raven had become an artist living under the name Churton Fairman on Bodmin Moor.

This was his real name. He was the son of the actress Hilary Moore, Gerald Du Maurier's tall leading lady, who died in America when Fairman was a child. He claimed that his father sold him for £500 to his three maiden aunts, who sent him to Aldenham School. Later he ran away from Magdalen College, Oxford, to join the Ballet Rambert and became Angela Rambert's partner.

After war service with the Royal Ulster Rifles he turned to photography, specialising in ballet shots. In 1949 he married Aurelia, a refugee from the Spanish Civil War, and took her back to her home. This inspired him to write a book, *Another Spain* (1952), about Spain's undiscovered countryside. Later in London he moonlighted from a theatrical job by playing flamenco guitar music in a Spanish restaurant.

A meeting with the director Peter Brook whilst in Spain to experience Seville's Holy Week led to Fairman's becoming a stage manager and actor. He appeared in Moscow with John Gielgud and for almost a decade he was a production manager for early ITV drama programmes. When ITV's *Stars on Sunday* religious series suddenly ended Fairman presented both the acclaimed *Ten Commandments* programme and its successor *Songs That Matter*. He also contributed to ATV's weekday *Epilogue* slots.

In 1964 he called himself "Mike Raven" for pirate radio broadcasts on Atlanta, Radio King and 390. He achieved nationwide fame in 1967 as one of the first disc jockeys to broadcast on Radio 1's launch day and his 30-minute Sunday night *The Mike Raven Blues* show soon became a two-hour slot.

As Mike Raven he went on to appear in several horror films including *Crucible of Terror* (1971) and *Discipline of Death* (1972).

It was Fairman's own decision to leave radio in 1971 and two years later he and his second wife, Mandy, moved to Cornwall, where they converted a 17th-century pigsty into a cottage. In 1974, at the age of 50, he began to produce carvings in wood and stone. In 1980, without any farming experience, he and his large family moved to a remote and run-down farm near Blisland on Bodmin Moor, where the sculpting continued.



Fairman: "A Crucifix for Today?" Photograph: BBC

Looking back after 10 years at the farm he saw his whole life as having been conditioned by what he believed to be his unorthodox struggle to come to terms with his sexuality and content with equally unsuccessful attempts to live up to his Christian beliefs. Having abandoned his celebrity name he had a long and frustrating search for recognition in his new life. Before putting his interpretations of Old and New Testament passages into sculptural form there were the horses, sheep and cows to look after.

Two incidents drew him on. First he suffered a heart condition and this was ordered to stop. Then he suffered a heart condition and this was ordered to stop. Then he suffered a heart condition and this was ordered to stop.

He determined not to sell a single piece until he had enough for an exhibition but there followed a series of misfortunes. The distinguished art critic Peter Fuller had his interest aroused but before he could put pen to paper he was killed in the car accident which shook the art world. Then the artist Lady Christina Hoare discovered his work whilst promoting her proposed Christian Arts Centre, praising him for his honesty and freedom from other artists' influence, she wrote: "A soul being led by the Holy Spirit, surely." Hoare invited him to exhibit with her in London but she too died unexpectedly.

Fairman's first show was eventually arranged in Cornwall but within hours of the advertised opening the sponsors pulled out on the grounds that some of the religious works were in bad taste.

Those controversial pieces in local wood and Cornish granite were at last displayed in London, in the crypt of St George's Church, Bloomsbury (1980 and 1992), where the priest-in-charge was chaplain to the visual arts. Fairman was delighted to discover that the many visitors scrutinising his work included Brian Sewell.

In the capital there was less objection to Fairman's unorthodox interpretations, such as *Pentecost*, where Jacob's maleness is highlighted as he wrestles with the angel. Fairman anyway believed that today the sexes were as close as they had ever been and was concerned about the place of women in the Church being recognised. In *Mater Dolorosa* Mary shares Christ's agony with the nails passing through both their hands. *A Crucifix for Today?* has a man and a woman back to back on a natural cross formed by a tree.

The *Deposition from the Cross*, which attempts to solve the physical problems faced by Joseph of Arimathea in detaching and lowering the dead body from a standing cross, was shown alongside work by Henry Moore in the 1993 "Images of Christ" exhibition, a survey of 20th-century religious iconography, at Northampton and St Paul's Cathedral, London.

Recently Fairman saw his sculpture go on permanent display at the Penzance Gallery in Penzance. He was reconciled with the Roman Catholic Church and had even dug his own grave on the moor.

Leigh Hattis

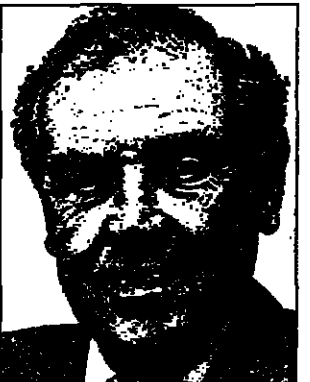
Austin Churton Fairman (Mike Raven), actor, broadcaster and artist: born London 15 November 1924; married 1949 Aurelia Pascual y Perez (one son, three daughters; marriage dissolved 1965); 1964 Mandy Kilbey (two sons; died Bodmin Moor 24 April 1997).

Dr Robert Simpson

Robert Simpson was a true son of Ballymena, the Co Antrim town where he spent his life as a general practitioner and which he represented for 20 years in the Stormont Parliament. He spoke with the Scots accent typical of the area and exemplified the qualities of that hardy race: openness, honesty, a bluntness of speech relieved and lightened by a lovely self-deprecating humour.

As the eldest son of a small farmer he would have inherited 50 fertile acres but had no inclination for the back-breaking slog, though he was deeply immersed in the ways of the countryside.

He was educated at the local academy and at Queen's University, Belfast, where he qualified in 1946, setting up his plate in his home town and known to all and sundry as Doctor Bob. When he entered politics in 1952, a Unionist nomination – and with his Protestant background there was no agonising over which party he would choose – meant a guaranteed seat. In fact for all the elections



Simpson: non-partisan

until 1969 he was returned unopposed. Yet his open ecumenism was there from the outset and he was a staunch upholder of liberal Unionist politics.

When he was appointed Minister of Community Relations under the premier James Chichester-Clark he resigned from both the Orange and Masonic Orders, in order that he might be seen to be non-partisan, and set about promoting contacts and making friends across the two communities.

To that end, with the help of Maurice Hayes, then director of the Community Relations Commission, he instigated a series of dinner parties attended by well-known figures in the arts and academic circles, among them the young Seamus Heaney, like himself born on a small farm not 30 miles from Ballymena. Hayes relates how these convivial gatherings eventually collapsed under the weight of vintage hospitality generously provided by Paddy Fallon, a well-known hotel proprietor. But the friendship with Heaney survived and when the poet became a Nobel laureate last year Simpson, no mean hand with the pen himself, was moved to celebrate the occasion in verse:

What's more our fathers unacquainted
Buying and selling sleek milk cows
On the same Fair Hill, bartered,
teased and coaxed.
Clinging deals with a handspan,
revelled with hot dinners at McIlwaine
These two men, unacquainted, went
their separate ways
One a Planter, one a Gael.

Before his inclusion in gov-

ernment Simpson had been a firm supporter of Terence O'Neill's reformist policies and opposed to the hardline Unionist faction whose fuleman was Brian Faulkner.

This was notable in his advocacy of "one man one vote", the abolition of the business or property vote which still existed in Northern Ireland. In a speech at Stormont in April 1969 he had said:

If we are going to accept British standards in general we must accept them in toto. That is how I see the granting of one man one vote. I think it should be accepted as a British standard that one should not go out to sink the boat in which one happens to be sailing especially when that would mean destroying our good name and the livelihood of those we represent.

In the crucial Stormont election of 1969, known as the "Ulster" or the "Crossroads" election, candidates were divided into "pro" and "anti" O'Neill, labelling the moderates against the "last-ditchers". Simpson was firmly on the side of what he saw as the angels. It was this clear consistency of purpose

which made him an obvious candidate for Community Relations under O'Neill's successor and standard-bearer, Chichester-Clark.

This allegiance effectively ended Bob Simpson's career in politics, because two years later, when Faulkner took over the premiership from Chichester-Clark, he was unceremoniously sacked from the Cabinet along with another leading O'Neill supporter, Pheleim O'Neill, then Minister of Agriculture. The split with Faulkner was far from harmonious and, a year later, Simpson resigned both his seat and an active role in political life, a decision he never regretted.

For he had several other intensely rewarding strings to his bow. Until his death he was a regular and prolific contributor to all manner of journals and periodicals, writing on medicine and agriculture but especially on the self-financing travel which took him across the world, to the Antipodes, South Africa, Russia and the palaces of Rajasthan. The canny Ballymena thriftiness is never too far away.

In enthusing over the cathedral at Reims he remembers to mention the nearby Logis de France where you pay for the room, not the number of occupants, a considerable saving! A weekly medical column widely syndicated went under the pseudonym Dr John Barfoot.

His other lively interests were his two-acre garden in Ballymena where he specialised in trees, of which he had over 250 species, and music. He was one of the moving spirits in the annual Ballymena Music Festival, a competition along the lines of the traditional Ulster feis. As fund-raiser and administrator he saw the festival as an instrument of harmonious co-operation between the two communities, a leitmotif of his life's endeavour.

Roy Bradford

Robert Simpson, medical practitioner and politician: born 3 July 1923; MP (Unionist) Mid-Antrim, Parliament of Northern Ireland 1953-72; PC (Northern Ireland) 1970; married 1954 Dorothy Strawbridge (two sons, one daughter); died 8 April 1997.

Allan Francovich

It was not I, but Tiny Rowland, who persuaded Allan Francovich to make his film about Lockerbie, writes Dr Jim Swire (further to the obituary by Tim Dalyell, 28 April).

I first met Allan for lunch in a London Italian restaurant, where his facility with languages and vivacious enjoyment of the occasion revealed him as high-

ly intelligent and widely read. It soon became apparent that he really cared about the human consequences of the disaster even more deeply than he resented what he had seen as, at the very least, a readily avoidable massacre of so many innocents.

He had already assembled a team, backed by the financial muscle, determination and

world-wide contacts of Tiny Rowland of Lounrho, to make a film, and he needed to hear (and was profoundly moved by) the plight of the relatives. Thus began a friendship which we greatly valued.

Allan had worked for the Observer film unit and become known to Tiny, who selected him as his man to investigate

Lockerbie, giving him complete editorial control over *The Maltese Double Cross*.

During the making of the film it became clear that there were people in powerful positions who were determined to stop it: the lives of Allan and other team members were threatened. Tiny Rowland, his executive Ken Etheridge and

contributors to the film suffered grievously. This extraordinary exhibition by "authority", starting with accusations of being "Libyan dupes", and continuing with overt threats even of imprisonment, lent credibility to growing suspicions that something desperate was being concealed and that "the team" must be getting warm.

When the truth about Lockerbie is made clear, it may turn out that Allan Francovich's last film and his dogged following of its ramifications were his greatest contribution to the cause of truth in analysing the way that the intelligence services of the world's most powerful nations relate both to other nations and to its own citizens.

BIRTHS

COOKE: On 25 April 1997, to Libby (nee Reid) and Gordon, a son, Timothy Kenneth Reid, a brother for John.

WHITTING: On 20 April 1997, to Emma (nee Fallon) and John, a son, Thomas John.

MARRIAGES

WILKINSON/MENHENVEN: On 12 April, in glorious sunshine, Caroline, younger daughter of Rupert and the late Vera Wilkinson, of Pangbourne and Weymouth, and Mark, elder son of David and Audrey Menhenvet, of Beckenham. Thanks to Mr God.

DEATHS

BOTT: William George, Esq. ARCS BSc, peacefully on 26 April 1997 at Wandsworth House, Oxfordshire, aged 57 years. Formerly secretary of SLUB Examinations (Bristol). Beloved father of Elizabeth, Andrew, Georgina, Victoria, Caroline and Julian and loving grandfather of Luke, Kate, Sam and Toby. Funeral service at Wandsworth Parish Church, near Bathurst, on Friday 9 May at 11am. Donations in lieu of flowers please, for Wandsworth House, and all enquiries to J&M Hume, 33 Albert Street, Bathurst, Oxfordshire, 01295 265434.

HORNBY: After a short illness, at Monklands Hospital, on 25 April 1997, Terry, father of Malcolm, Elaine and Carol. Funeral service at Dalwood Crematorium, Broomhouse, on

Births, Marriages & Deaths

Friday 2 May, at 12 noon. Family flowers only, please.

LEMMARE: Iris, the conductor, died at her home at Ashham Bryan, York on Wednesday, 27 April. The funeral will be at York Crematorium on Thursday 1 May at 2pm. A collection will be held for the RSPB. All enquiries please to the North Yorkshire Co-operative Funeral Service, Cromwell Road, York YO1 1DU. Telephone 01904 643936.

Announcements for GASTRO, BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, etc.) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephone 0171-293 0111 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2412) or faxed to 0171-293 2018, and sent to 66-29 a line (VAT extra). OTHER GAZETTE announcements (medical, financial, etc.) should be submitted by a daytime telephone number.

Birthdays

Mr Frank Amersbach, painter, 66; Mr John Barrington, squash player, 56; Miss Ann Bell, actress, 57; Baroness Chalker of Wallasey, 55; Mr Tom Clarke, Editor, *Spring Life*, 58; Mr Daniel Day-Lewis, actor, 40; Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde, chairman, Independent Committee for Supervision of Standards of Telephone Information Services, 54; Mrs Ruth Deech, Principal, St Anne's College, Oxford, 49; Sir Peter de la Billière, 63; Miss Anita Dobson, actress, 48; Mr Lorne Donegan, musician, 66; Mr Israel Feinstein QC, former President, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 76; Dame Rennie Fritchie, former chairman, South and West Regional Health Authority, 55; Mr Deryck Gwyler, actor and comedian, 83; Sir Patrick Hamill, former Chief Constable, Strathclyde, 67; Miss Celeste Holm, actress, 78; Mr Saddam Hussein al-Bakr, president and prime minister of Iraq, 60; Mile Zila Jeanmaire, dancer, 73; Professor David Johns, Vice-Chancellor, Bradford University, 60; Miss Cheryl Kennedy, actress, 50; Sir Anthony Laughton, cinematographer, 70; Mr Rod McKinnon, composer and poet, 64; Mr Zubin Mehta, conductor, 61; Mr Johnny Miller, golfer, 50; Sir Fraser Noble, former Vice-Chancellor, Aberdeen University, 79; General Sir Patrick Palmer, Constable and Governor of Windsor Castle, 64; Lord Harold Shapiro, composer, 77; Mr Jeremy Taylor, former MB 68; Mr John Tindie, painter, 65; Mr Alfred Valentine, former cricketer, 67; Mr Richard Warwick, actor, 52; Nigel Williams, ambassador to the United Nations, 60; Professor Heinz Wolff, bio-engineer, 69; Sir Peter

Younge, former colonial administrator, 81.

Anniversaries

Births: Alexander II, Tsar of Russia, 1818; William Randolph Hearst, newspaper proprietor, 1863; Sir Thomas Beecham, conductor, 1879; Sir Malcolm Sargent, conductor, 1895; Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, jazz composer and bandleader, 1899. Deaths: Wallace Carothers, chemist and developer of nylon, 1937; Sir Alfred Joseph Hitchcock, film director, 1980. On this day: the Corn Law Bill received Royal Assent, 1842; in Ethiopia a severe earthquake caused the death of 24 people, injuring 168, 1969. Today is the Feast Day of St Catherine of Siena, St Hugh of Cluny, St Joseph Cottolengo, St Robert of Molesmes and St Wilfrid the Younger.

Lectures

National Gallery: Norman Coady, "Drawings (v): Giotto and Italian Baroque Drawing", 1pm. British Museum: Colin Collins, "The Nabataean City of Petra", 1.15pm. National Portrait Gallery: Phyllis Gorkick-King, "Felix Topolski and His Portraits", 1.10pm. RIBA Architecture Centre, London W1: John Tuomey, "O'Donnell and Tuomey", 6.30pm.

Appointments

Mr Robin Christopher, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Indonesia. Mr Tony Abbott, to be Governor of Montserrat. Mr Justice Tuckey, to be Judge in Charge of the Commercial List.

'Independent' was not in contempt of court

LAW REPORT

29 April 1997

Attorney General v Newspaper Publishing plc; Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (Lord Bingham, Lord Chief Justice, Mr Justice Latham and Mr Justice Poole) 25 April 1997

Conduct by a third party which was inconsistent with a court order in only a trivial or technical way did not amount to a contempt of court.

The Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) dismissed an application by the Attorney General for penalties for contempt of court to be imposed on Newspaper Publishing plc, Ian Hargreaves and Christopher Blackhurst.

The application was made as a result of the publication in the *Independent* on 8 November 1995 of facsimiles of parts of two documents referred to in the judgment of Lord Taylor CJ, delivered on 7 November 1995, in the appeals of William Blackledge, John Grecian, Bryan Mason and Colin Phillips against their convictions of offences in connection with the contravention of certain Export of Goods (Control) Orders by Ordnance Technologies Ltd ("the Ordnance appeal").

Mr Hargreaves and Mr Blackhurst were at the relevant time respectively editor of, and

a journalist employed by, the *Independent*. Philip Havers QC and Ian Burnett (Treasury Solicitor for the Attorney General; Chrys Gray QC and Justin Rutherford (Kingsley Napley) for the respondents.

Lord Bingham CJ said that the Ordnance appeal had concerned the export of arms to Iraq. Following the collapse of a similar prosecution in the Matrix Churchill case, the Ordnance defendants had launched their appeals. On 17 July 1995 the Lord Chief Justice had ordered the disclosure to the defence, for use only in connection with the proceedings, of certain redacted documents in respect of which public interest immunity certificates had been signed. He ordered that the documents be returned after the proceedings.

In giving his judgment in the appeal on 7 November the Lord Chief Justice had quoted from two of the documents. After the judgment he had ordered the return of the documents and observed that orders concerning them had not always been observed to the let-

ter. Any further breach would be referred to the Attorney General.

On 6 November 1995 Mr Blackhurst had obtained, from a source believed to be unconnected with the Ordnance appellants and their advisers, a set of papers relating to the case, some of which were subject to redactions or in summarised form. The report in the following day's newspaper included facsimiles of parts of two of the documents quoted from in the judgment, and they were what founded the present application.

The Attorney General accepted that the order made on 17 July 1995 had not been made against the world at large or the media, and that the respondents were not, therefore, bound by it. He submitted, relying on *Attorney General v Newspaper Publishing plc* [1988] Ch 333, that if a third party, with the requisite knowledge and intent, so acted as to frustrate or undermine or set at naught the basis upon which a court had determined that justice should be administered, he was guilty of contempt because

he thereby interfered with the due administration of justice. The respondents accepted that in the light of that authority a person might be liable for contempt even though not directly bound by an order of the court. They submitted, correctly, that it was not any conduct inconsistent with a court order which would render a third party guilty of contempt.

Where it was sought to impose indirect liability on a third party, the justification for so doing lay in that party's interference with the administration of justice. It was not necessary to show that the administration of justice in the relevant proceedings had been wholly frustrated or rendered utterly futile, but there must have been some significant and adverse effect thereon.

The breaches committed by the respondents were in truth very minor. Reproduction of the form of the documents did not amount to a significant interference with the administration of justice. Although the application was a proper one for the Attorney General to have made in performance of his public duty, it must be dismissed.

Kate O'Hanlon, BARRISTER

مكتبة من الأصول

**EXECUTIVE
EXTRAVAGANZA**
is here!
see page 18
*
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business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

**FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR**

G7 warning fails to dampen the rising dollar

**Diane Coyle
Economics Editor**

The dollar forged ahead yesterday despite a weekend signal from the Group of Seven industrial countries that the rise in the US currency has gone far enough.

mood to test official resolve to maintain stable exchange rates," said Stephen Lewis, chief economist at London Bond Broking.

The dollar reached its highest level against the yen for more than three years, and its highest against the German mark for four and a half years yesterday morning, before dropping back a little. It ended in London at DM1.7285 and ¥126.55, both up on Friday's close.

1994. This is expected to boost housebuilding for the remainder of the year.

The statement went only a little further than earlier signals that exchange rates have moved far enough. It added only a comment on the importance of avoiding exchange rates that could lead to the re-emergence of large external imbalances.

The central bankers meeting in Washington continued to try to talk the US currency down yesterday. Hans Tietmeyer, Bundesbank President, said: "The US is interested in having a strong dollar but not a stronger one. We are very much interested in having a strong DM, but not a weaker one."

gle currency in Europe, and its implications for financial markets, would be monitored.

Mulcahy joins the elite who earn £1m a year

Terry Macalister

Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive of retail conglomerate Kingfisher, has joined the elite list of Britain's industrialists earning in excess of £1m a year.

The boss of the Comet electrical wholesaler and B&Q do-it-yourself chain saw his overall remuneration rise to £1.26m, a 26 per cent increase last year compared with 1995.

He earned a basic salary of £305,000, which, with bonuses, climbed to an annual total of £588,000 - a 68 per cent rise on the £350,000 he made in the previous 12 months.

Back in 1994 Sir Geoffrey did even better than 1996. He earned £1.4m in total but this time round his benefits, besides the usual company car and medical insurance, included personal tax advice.

Hambro stuns City with Co-op apology

John Willcock

Sir Chips Keswick, chairman of Hambros Bank, issued an unprecedented public apology to the Co-operative Wholesale Society yesterday and paid a "substantial" cash settlement for his bank's part in Andrew Kegan's aborted £1.2bn bid for the group.

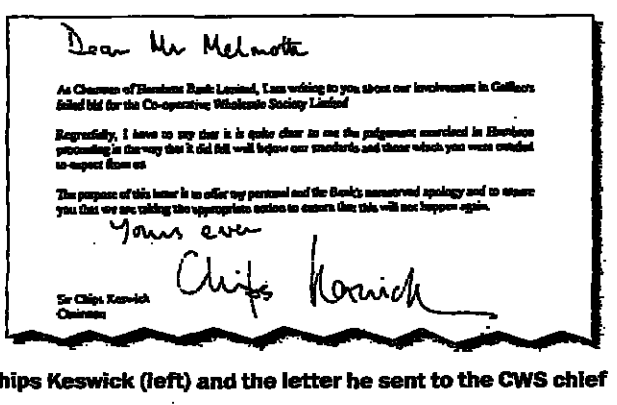
gising like this in public to an adversary. It will take years for Hambros' reputation to recover from this. The trouble is this story has become so public - it's even got into the non-financial press."

The independent inquiry by Norton Rose. "No regulatory inquiries would be made until Norton Rose had completed its work."

The CWS accepted the apology and dropped all legal action against the bank over the seven boxes of confidential CWS files used by Hambros during the bid attempt.

The bid collapsed on Friday after a High Court judge said the case represented a "gross, wilful and disgraceful breach of confidence."

As the fall-out from the aborted bid continued yesterday, Ronald Zimet, a key figure in the bid saga, resigned as chairman of Freepages Group because, a company spokesman said, Mr Zimet was worried that his involvement in the CWS affair was damaging Freepages' share price.



Unprecedented apology: Sir Chips Keswick (left) and the letter he sent to the CWS chief

Cable & Wireless Communications valued at £4.5bn after trading debut



Shares in Cable & Wireless Communications closed at 299.5p last night after their debut on the stock market, valuing the telephone and cable television company at £4.5bn. The launch of trading in London and New York was watched by Graham Wallace (right), chief executive of CWC, and his finance director, Nicholas Mearns. The opening price of 300p a share was in line with analysts' forecasts. The shares rose 5p in early trading before settling back just below their opening price. CWC is a merger of telecoms company Mercury Communications and cable operators Nynex, Bell CableMedia and Videotron. It is the largest provider of integrated telecoms and television entertainment services in Britain with 1.2 million telephone customers and 580,000 cable TV subscribers. Photograph: Jason Bye

Leeds Utd chief takes early bath

Michael Harrison

Robin Launders was yesterday forced out as chief executive of Leeds United less than a year after joining the club following its debut on the stock market. He will receive a pay-off of £150,000.

been finance director, is said to have been shocked by the decision.

He is being replaced by Jeremy Fenn, finance director of



Departure: Robin Launders is leaving Leeds after a year

BSM shares crash after profit warning

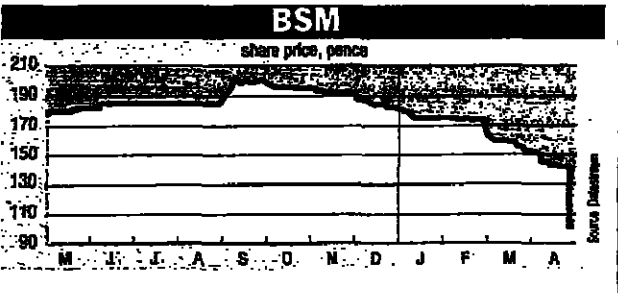
Michael Harrison

Shares in the driving school business BSM crashed by more than a quarter yesterday after the company warned that new rules for learners taking their tests will cut profits by a half for the first six months of the year.

stage but recovered slightly to end the day 37.5p lower at 103.5p - a reverse of 26 per cent.

bad weather in January, which affected the number of people taking lessons.

flecting these market conditions, the number of BSM franchised driving instructors has declined by 110 to 2,018 since the start of the year, while the number of driving lessons and driving tests are also down, BSM said.



those last year, BSM said it intended to maintain the interim dividend.

Commissioner says EMU on course

Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the European Commission responsible for the single currency project, assured an audience in Washington yesterday that EMU remained on course.

He stressed that the EMU heads of state will make their decision about which country can join the first phase based on "real figures for 1997 and the budget proposals for 1998."

STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100

Indices

Index	Close	Week's chg	Change%	2006/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD%
FTSE 100	4369.70	+59.2	+1.4	4444.30	4056.60	3.70
FTSE 250	4600.50	-17.2	-0.4	4729.40	4489.40	3.66
FTSE 350	2143.00	+21.5	+1.0	2194.30	2017.90	8.67
FTSE SmallCap	2298.67	+2.6	+0.1	2374.20	2178.29	3.04
FTSE All-Share	2112.16	+19.7	+0.9	2163.94	1989.78	6.82
New York	6738.87	+95.3	+0.5	7085.16	5032.94	1.82
DAX	18612.86	+260.7	+1.4	19445.00	17303.05	0.851
Hong Kong	12945.76	+104.6	+0.8	13868.24	12055.17	3.291
Frankfurt	3377.27	+32.9	+1.0	3480.59	2848.77	1.581

Statistics as of 28 April

INTEREST RATES									
UK Interest rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.19	7.0	7.67	7.99	7.78	8.10			
US	5.56	6.31	6.94	6.59	7.14	8.84			
Japan	0.53	0.75	2.67	2.41					
Germany	3.13	3.28	5.32	6.37	6.68				
Bond Yields %									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.19	7.0	7.67	7.99	7.78	8.10			
US	5.56	6.31	6.94	6.59	7.14	8.84			
Japan	0.53	0.75	2.67	2.41					
Germany	3.13	3.28	5.32	6.37	6.68				
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
UK	6.19	7.0	7.67	7.99	7.78	8.10			
US	5.56	6.31	6.94	6.59	7.14	8.84			
Japan	0.53	0.75	2.67	2.41					
Germany	3.13	3.28	5.32	6.37	6.68				

CURRENCIES									
£/\$									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
£/\$	1.6313	+0.63c	1.5114	0.6130	-0.24	0.8616			
\$/£	1.6245	-0.88c	1.5080	0.6156	+0.33	0.8610			
\$/DM									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
\$/DM	1.6245	-0.88c	1.5080	0.6156	+0.33	0.8610			
DM/\$	2.7997	-0.18p	2.3118	1.7162	-0.75p	1.5295			
OTHER INDICATORS									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
Oil	18.15	+0.3	19.84	155.4	+2.6p	150.9	15 May		
Gold	342.45	+0.75	384.25	109.7	+2.6p	107.9	25 Apr		
Gold \$	210.98	+1.53	260.92	Base Rates	- 6.00p	6.75			

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN
EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMONDWould-be high-flyer
EIS remains
firmly earthbound

The engineering group EIS makes much of the fact that profits never declined during the recession and indeed that it has now raised its results for 26 consecutive years. The problem is that much of that growth appears to have been achieved through uninspiring acquisitions, financed by dilutive share issues. Earnings per share, which only recently surpassed the 1990 peak of 28.2p, have gone nowhere.

Yesterday, the group compounded its dull record with a warning that it had been hit by the combined impact of depressed European markets and a strong pound. The news sent the shares crashing 32p to 312.5p, a level not seen for more than five years.

The 1996 figures accompanying the announcement suggested a year in line with recent form. Pre-tax profits rose 15 per cent to £23.4m but share earnings barely moved.

The £18m acquisition of Aerostructures Hamble at the end of 1995 still looks expensive. EIS admits the business, which has only just broken into profits, was in a shakier condition than it first thought and it is taking another £5.2m write-off. It should have been well warned: Aerostructures, which makes the leading edge of wings for plane makers such as Boeing, was one of the worst in a string of disastrous new issues a few years ago.

But its strenuous efforts to get key contracts for Boeing's 737-700 and the McDonnell Douglas MD 80/90 back on track are being rewarded in much increased business. Production of four wing sets a month for Boeing is set to more than double to 10 by the end of the year and recent forecasts by Smiths Industries suggest output of the aircraft could double again by 1999.

EIS is strongly geared into the rising civil aviation market, which accounts for around 60 per cent of the £225m sales out of the group's aircraft and precision engineering division. But the outlook for the other 40 per cent involved in defence is also increasingly rosy.

The other half of EIS, in oil, gas and petrochemicals engineering, is less exciting. The group claims to be attempting to move away from the sort of process engineering operation traditionally bedevilled by

Rising losses at
Chiroscience

Most biotechnology companies have still to sell a single product, yet many have proved brilliant at marketing themselves. Chiroscience is a case in point. The group has racked up ever-increasing losses, which grew by another 61 per cent to £18.7m in the year to February and are now 15 times the level of four years ago. Despite that, the group still had £51.4m in the bank earlier this year, raised from cash calls on its shareholders, and even after yesterday's 17.5p fall to 335p, it has a healthy market capitalisation of £354m.

The company has not been shy about selling the virtues of its drugs pipeline, which in-

cludes a look-alike version of British Biotech's Marinastat anti-cancer drug and a non-steroidal asthma drug based on so-called PDE IV inhibitors. It is already claiming its matrix metalloproteinase drug for cancer and its asthma treatment offer reduced side effects. Yet the comparisons are being made against drugs some years away from the market, while the company's own treatments will only start to be tested in humans later this year.

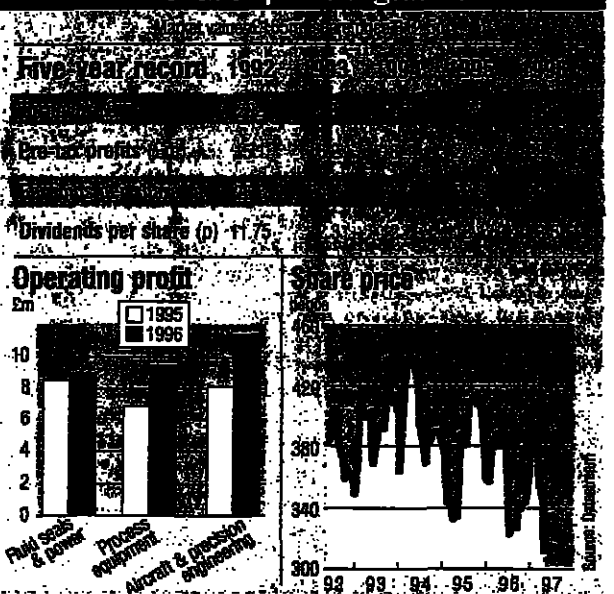
More tangible evidence of progress came yesterday with news the Chirotech subsidiary had become the first part of Chiroscience to break into the black, recording profits of £1.2m last year. The business merely provides intermediate chemicals, admittedly sophisticated ones, to other pharmaceutical companies.

Chiroscience is promising an update next month on progress at Darwin Molecular, the US drug discovery operation acquired last year in another marketing coup, bringing in as it did Microsoft founder Bill Gates as a shareholder.

But more important is the outlook for Levobupivacaine, a more chemically pure version of an anaesthetic produced by Astra. That is on course to be submitted for approval in Europe this year.

But with so much riding on that single product, the shares remain speculative. A further cash call is also a real prospect, given that operating losses are set to rise to £25m this year.

EIS Group: At a glance



Small beer is getting stronger

AIM-listed Surrey Free Inns may be small beer among pub chains of the scale of JD Wetherspoon or Enterprise Inns, but it has been going consistently in the right direction since it was returned to the black in 1993. Yesterday it took a further significant step in filling out its portfolio with the acquisition of Richardson's Inns and Cash, with another £450,000 dependent on the performance of Highnoon.

The deal will be funded through a placing and one-for-eight open offer at 420p, raising £1.2m net of expenses. The move will add six inns and two café wine bars, including three in the City of London, to SFI's total of 30 sites, which includes the Litten Tree and Bar Med brands. Richardson's Inns is a joint venture between the Richardson family and Whitbread, specialising in large, high-volume "superpubs". However, SFI says it has no plans to keep the For Your Eyes Only bar in Park Royal, which features lap-dancing and was due to be joined by a sister operation in the City until the Richardson's thought better of it. Gerald Richardson will join the SFI board and invest £1m in SFI shares.

SFI, which made profits of £1.19m in the year to the end of May last year, yesterday updated its previously reported interim figures, saying profits were £1.56m in the 36 weeks

to 9 February. It claimed the acquisition would add £7.5m to sales and £1.5m to profit in the first full year.

Whitbread sold its 4.5 per cent stake in SFI three months ago, but Regent Inns still has a 6.1 per cent stake and has yet to decide on whether to take up the new shares.

Analysts yesterday upped their profits forecast for the current year to £2.2m and to £4.75m for 1997/98, which puts the shares, up 5p at 455p, on just under 16 times forecast earnings. They are no longer cheap, but they look a good each-way bet on a rapidly growing market or alternatively a take-out bid from a bigger, slower rival. The offer shares look worth a punt.

Forecasts give Halifax a £13bn valuation on its flotation

Clifford German

The Halifax Building Society could be worth almost £13bn when it converts to a bank and floats on the stock market at the end of May, according to analysts in the City after the building society yesterday released further financial details.

The society said yesterday it will issue 2.51 billion shares and it would have paid a dividend of 13.6p net out of earnings of 34.1p for the 11 months to the end of December. If the shares are valued on the same price earnings ratio as the A&L flotation last week, this would suggest a market price of 510p a share.

That in turn would value the minimum entitlement of 200 free shares at more than £1,000 and the average holding at £1,730. Eligible Halifax borrowers are entitled to 200 shares, investors with between £100 and £1,000 on their account will receive 200 shares, plus one extra share for every £50 held on the lower of the balances held on the two qualifying dates in November 1995 and February 1997.

The society also yesterday set a minimum price of 415p for the free shares it will auction on 30 May on behalf of any of its 7.6 million members who want their windfalls in cash. If offers from institutions fail to reach this they will not be sold without a fresh instruction from members.

Gary Marsh, head of corporate affairs at the Halifax, said: "We have set the minimum to reassure investors so that they know that we will not sell below

this amount. In this way they do not have to worry about the possible adverse impact of the election and any subsequent rise in interest rates on the value of their windfall."

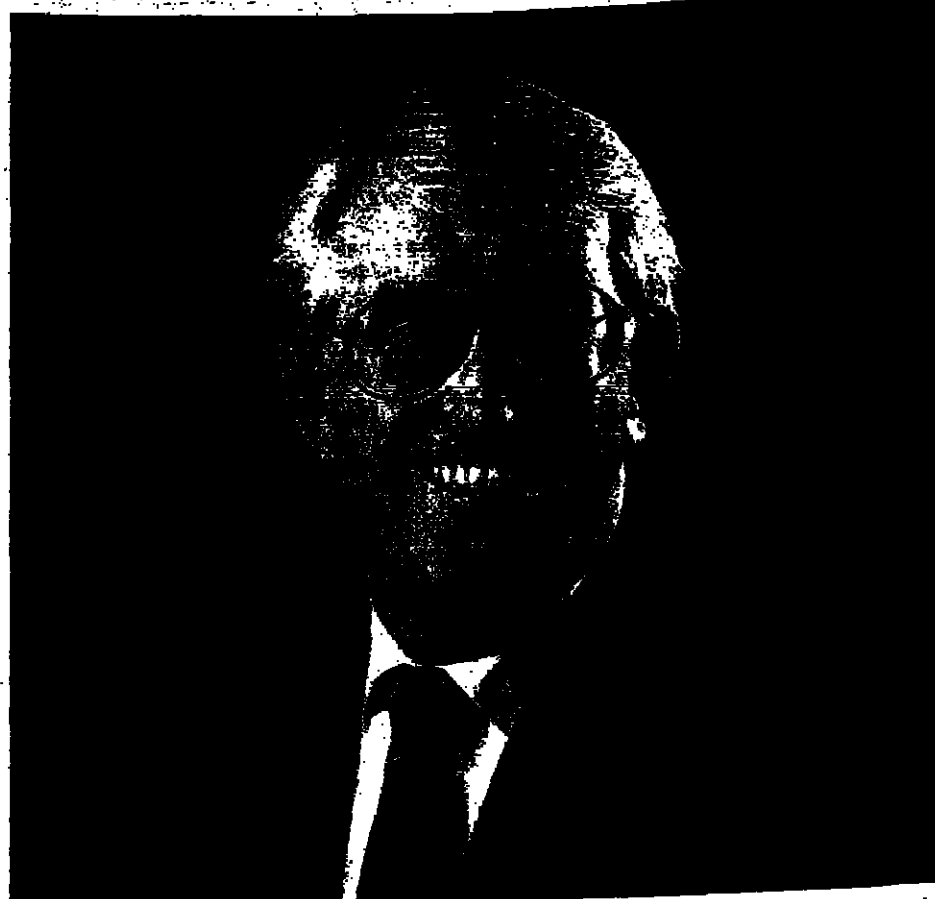
Andrew Faulds and Mike Blackburn, Halifax chairman and chief executive respectively, will be touring City institutions to persuade them to bid higher than the 415p minimum. City sources suggested the minimum price of 415p per share will be comfortably exceeded at flotation on Monday 2 June, giving far bigger cash payouts to those who want to sell on that day.

The Halifax transfer document last December estimated the likely share value to be between 390p and 450p, since when shares in the banking sector have risen by an average of 18 per cent.

Matthew Pousonby, senior associate director at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, which is helping to oversee the book-building exercise, said he hoped the share price at flotation would be higher than the published floor, although he refused to speculate by how much.

Mr Marsh added that Halifax had considered a similar approach to Alliance & Leicester. The A&L, which floated last week, said that it would halt the sale of its shares if stock markets plunged by 20 per cent or more.

Members who want to sell must complete and return a form to the Halifax if they want it to sell their shares free of charge to institutional investors on 30 May, prior to the start of normal trading on the Monday.



City tours: Chief executive Mike Blackburn will be visiting institutions before the auction

Halifax executives are now hoping for an orderly run of sell orders rather than a last-minute rush close to the 26 May deadline, which they admitted might overwhelm the administration.

The Halifax also confirmed

yesterday that the maximum number of shares to be issued will be 2.51 billion, down 50 million from the original estimate.

The fall reflects the drop in the number of eligible members from the initial 8 million to 7.6

million, caused by members closing accounts, cutting balances below the minimum qualifying figure of £100 on the qualifying date of 24 February, or paying off mortgages in spite of the losing their membership privileges.

Quality
Care in
frame for
takeover

Magnus Grimond

Quality Care Homes, the Darlington-based nursing home group, saw its shares soar 37p to 311p yesterday after revealing that it was in bid talks. Any deal close to last night's closing price would put a price tag of £42.6m on the company and bring a windfall of more than £20m for the group's founder and executive chairman, Duncan Bannatyne, a local entrepreneur. Michael Fallon, the former Conservative sports minister, is another director who could be expected to benefit from any takeover.

The identity of the potential acquirer was not revealed yesterday, but speculation centred on an unnamed US real estate investment trust. Discussions are understood to have been under way for around two months, with the final offer expected to be close to the current market price. Two years ago, Mr Bannatyne, who with family trusts owns just over 50 per cent of the company, rejected a bid at 330p a share from Exceler Health Care, an offshoot of the US nursing home group Sun Healthcare now renamed Ashbourne. CrestaCare, a rival British nursing home group, was also a disappointed bidder at that stage.

Yesterday, the only information from Quality Care was a short statement from the board saying it was involved in discussions which "may or may not lead to an offer for the company". It promised to keep shareholders informed of further developments.

The company has seen pre-tax profits rise steadily from £1.84m in 1992 to £5.61m in the 12 months to last October. However, Paul Saper of nursing home analysts Laing & Buisson said yesterday that the group would struggle to meet stockbrokers' forecasts of between £6.2m and £6.5m this year. He suggested that the actual figure would come in at under £5m, after deducting normal industry depreciation charges. The group would find the going increasingly tough as local authority budgets, the principal form of funding for private nursing homes, were squeezed even harder, he claimed.

Go-Ahead bid
puts drivers in
line for windfall

Terry Macalister

Scores of Brighton bus drivers yesterday found themselves in line for windfall payments of around £17,000 each following a recommended £5.76m takeover bid from the Go-Ahead Group to buy their company, Brighton Transport.

But the planned takeover by the fast-growing bus and rail group from the Gateshead-based Go-Ahead could still be halted by intervention of the competition authorities which said last night they were looking at the case.

Martin Ballinger, managing director of Go-Ahead, is confident the deal will go through without a hitch. He said yesterday: "It would be very peculiar if this was referred, considering that Stagecoach and FirstBus have dominant positions in cities like Southampton and Portsmouth."

The Office of Fair Trading confirmed it was considering whether the Brighton Transport takeover fell within its remit. But a spokesman added: "We look at hundreds of these type of cases."

It would not be Go-Ahead's

first brush with the competition authorities. Two years ago it was forced to give undertakings to the Department of Trade after being accused by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of "predatory pricing" in the North-east of England.

The Go-Ahead Group has been operating rival Brighton & Hove bus services to Brighton Transport for four years. It has seen a significant increase in passenger volumes as the local authority discourages city-centre car use.

Go-Ahead, which also operates bus services in Oxford and London, saw its underlying interim profits to 28 December rise by 82 per cent to £12.2m. The company also operates the Thames Link and Thames Train services.

The proposed tie-up with Brighton Transport on the basis of 180p-per-Brighton-Transport share, has board approval. But the offer must still be approved by shareholders of Brighton Transport at an extraordinary general meeting.

Drivers and conductors are part of the 242 staff members who own Brighton Transport and its fleet of 84 buses and coaches.

McAlpine in bid
talks with Raine

Alfred McAlpine is in talks that may lead to an all-share offer for Raine, a rival building and construction group. The bid would be at a modest premium to Raine's share price of 19.5p, which values the group at almost £36m.

Analysts were reluctant to guess what the size of the "premium" that McAlpine would be prepared to pay, and one even suggested that news of the talks could flush out other bidders.

Howard Proctor, analyst at Société Générale Strauss Turnbull, said that he had recommended a "cautious" stance on McAlpine, until the terms of the possible bid were announced. "Superficially, Raine appears to be a good fit, but we are suggesting waiting until it

becomes clearer what McAlpine is prepared to pay."

McAlpine's shares firmed up to 167.5p yesterday. Leslie Kent, analyst at Mees-Pierson, said the premium McAlpine was prepared to pay was the "54,000 dollar question". However, he noted that Raine reported net assets of 32p a share at the end of last year.

Raine has a land bank of 300,000 plots with planning permission and "McAlpine have realised that what Raine needs is a big parent," Mr Kent said.

"This is by no means cut and dry, and Raine could be made more offers once McAlpine have made theirs. It takes a bid to draw attention to a recovering company like Raine," Mr Kent added.

IN BRIEF

Vega to buy CBL Technology for £5.5m

Vega Group said it had agreed to acquire CBL Technology, a software-based training company, for up to £5.5m and it had been selected as the preferred bidder for a £6m RAF training contract for providing a ground-based training facility for medium support helicopters. The company also said its current order book was ahead of last year, but the strength of sterling would leave this year's profits unchanged on last year. Vega said it expected the acquisition of CBL to be earnings enhancing from the outset. CBL reported pre-tax profits of £404,000 in the year to 31 March on sales of £1.7m.

Profits drop at Alexander Workwear

Alexander Workwear announced a drop in taxable profits from £5.3m to £1.1m for the year to 1 February. Dividend total, however, is maintained at 6.5p. The results included an exceptional charge of £2.8m, relating to the costs of the rationalisation and reorganisation of the group's manufacturing activities. Gerald Dennis, chairman, said: "Although it is too early to identify significant, lasting improvements in demand patterns, there is evidence of strengthening demand in the current year and sales are firm against the same period last year."

600 Group sells optical business

The 600 Group has agreed to sell Ealing Electro-Optics to Coherent Inc for £6m. Ealing Electro-Optics, which has operations in the UK and US, makes and distributes optical components and test systems. Coherent makes lasers and optical components, and is also based in the US and the UK. Ealing had a turnover in the financial year ending 31 March of £5.2m, and generated a profit before tax and interest of £250,000. The 600 Group intends to invest a proportion of the proceeds in expanding its international machine tool distribution network.

Allen Diesels wins £25m power contract

Rolls-Royce said its Allen Diesels subsidiary had won a £25m order from IberAfrica Power to upgrade the 45-megawatt Nairobi South power station project in Kenya. Allen Diesels will be responsible for all mechanical and electrical engineering and for the supply of eight 5.8-megawatt Niigata heavy fuel burning engines from Japan.

ITG seeks listing in London and Ireland

Independent Telecoms Group, one of the largest communications service providers in Ireland, is to seek a simultaneous listing on the Alternative Investment Market of the London Stock Exchange and the Developing Companies Market of the Irish Stock Exchange through a placing of 1.41 million shares at 148p. Proceeds of the placing will fund future development activities. Plans include the development of its payphone management business and evaluation of the potential to enter. Since 1994, turnover has increased at a compound rate of 57 per cent per annum. It expects turnover for the year to end-April next will be in excess of Ir£5.7m and predicts pre-tax profits of Ir£480,000.

Revelation Piccadilly profits jump

Revelation Piccadilly, the retailing group, reported an increase in pre-tax profits from £69,000 to £271,000 for the year to 23 February. The dividend is 0.079p. Stephen Barclay, chairman, said year-on-year sales were up 10 per cent in the first two months of the new financial year. "The group has entered the current year in a financially strong position. We have the resources to substantially improve profitability and cash generation both by opening new retail branches and by developing the distribution business through the introduction of new packaging, new products and new exclusive distribution arrangements," he said.

Bullough sells Pipeline subsidiary

Bullough has sold its Pipeline Engineering & Supply subsidiary to an investment syndicate led by Quanter VCT for a total of £1.42m. Pipeline made pre-tax profits in the year to 31 October 1996 of £161,000, with net assets before inter-company debt at that date put at £1.37m.

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Kalamazoo 'breaches' hit shares

Kalamazoo Computer Group's shares plunged 22p to a three-year low of 77.5p yesterday following a profits warning, resulting from the discovery of "certain breaches" of internal control within the UK business solutions division.

Two operational managers at the division have been dismissed but are not being named for legal reasons. They left in the "last 10 days".

A brief statement by the company said the "division's management accounts do not reflect accurately its performance". A review of the breaches and internal controls is being conducted internally and with the assistance of auditors Deloitte & Touche.

Analysts had predicted a rise in profits to £7m, but now expect the full-year result to remain unchanged at £5.9m.

The company said the rest of its activities, particularly within the continental European computer division and the security print division, had performed in line with or ahead of expectations.

Kalamazoo said it would declare a final dividend not less than the 1996 final payout of 3.05p a share when preliminary results are announced around 26 June.

Company Results				
	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Alexander Workwear (p)	65.9m (55.3m)	1.1m (5.3m)	2.2p (10.3p)	6.5p (3p)
Chiroscience (p)	- (-)	-18.7m (-11.8m)	-21.5p (-16.9p)	- (-)
SAU (p)	60.5m (64.7m)	7.13m (7.02m)	39.21p (37.3p)	18p (14p)
EB Group (p)	540m (423m)	23.4m (20.3m)	28.7p (23.5p)	13.5m (11.7m)
Williams Bank (p)	8.98m (8.82m)	3.2m (2.8m)	27.25p (23.86p)	7.5p (4.7p)
Park Estates (Lloyds) (p)	- (-)	0.46m (0.25m)	14.88p (7.18p)	3p (-)
Revelation Piccadilly (p)	5.58m (4.16m)	0.27m (0.07m)	0.099p (0.041p)	0.079p (-)
Stratagema (p)	74.5m (56.2m)	0.71m (0.45m)	2p (1p)	2p (2p)
Survey Free Inns (p)	10.98m (-)	1.56m (-)	12.8p (-)	- (-)
Water Hall (p)	4.31m (4.72m)	-0.042m (0.11m)	-0.01p (0.02m)	0.02m (-)

(p) - Final (l) - Interim * 36 weeks to Feb 97; no comparatives * 12 months (p) only

125 من الأصل



COMMENT

As long as the American economy is expanding so much faster than Japan and Germany, and until this growth causes its foreign trade deficit to balloon again, the US currency will tend to climb

G7 'read my lips' declares open day on dollar

Watch what they do, not what they say. This was the currency dealers' eminently rational reaction yesterday to the flow of comments and communiqués from ministers and assorted officials gathered in Washington.

International officialdom says the dollar has gone far enough. It is not too strong, but as strong as they'd like. However, there is no sign that the G7 central banks will risk selling dollars for yen and marks when the economic fundamentals mean they would almost certainly make a loss on the transaction.

In these circumstances, the G7 statement is an invitation to the markets to push the dollar as far as they can, and traders are accepting the challenge. As long as the American economy is expanding so much faster than Japan and Germany, and until this growth causes its foreign trade deficit to balloon again, the US currency will tend to climb. Japan would need to raise its own interest rates unexpectedly if it really wanted to puncture the dollar balloon, which because exports are about the only thing driving the sluggish Japanese economy right now, it plainly does not.

The weekend's meetings of the G7 and IMF also brought a warning of turmoil on the foreign exchanges if the single currency project is delayed. Here again, the fundamentals will rightly carry more weight than the officials.

It is fudge or failure, not delay, that will

invite speculative attacks on the weaker currencies in the foreign exchange markets. If any of the more peripheral European countries are going to be shoehorned into EMU for political reasons when they have not yet slimmed their budget deficits enough to fit, or if any of them does not make the expected progress on the fiscal front this year, then they will become vulnerable to attack. There is quite a good chance of EMU-related currency turmoil during the next 12 months, but the markets will not be diverted from creating genuine havoc by an official attempt to channel it in a particular direction.

Accept the apology and let the matter rest

Apologies as grovelling as the one issued by Sir Chips Kaswick yesterday over Hambros' role in the failed bid for the Co-operative Wholesale Society are rare in the City but there may be merit in making them the norm in scandals of this sort. Certainly Sir Chips' remorse provides an elegant and swift way of settling an affair which could have dragged on for years at considerable reputational and monetary cost not just to Hambros, but to the City more generally.

It may well be that the circumstances surrounding Hambros' role were so utterly damning that Sir Chips had little option but to agree all that the Co-op and its advisers,

SBC Warburg, asked for, but if that were the case, then the Co-op would surely have been able to extract more. The usual practice in such affairs is for the triumphant City house to press home its advantage with regulators as vindictively and aggressively as possible. This is not always in the client's best interests since part of the purpose here is for the City adviser to do down his competitors. Too often, however, the result is a more general damage, both to the reputation of the City and because of the resulting regulatory crackdown, its freedom of manoeuvre.

This is not to argue that the City be able to sweep its more unsavoury episodes under the carpet by simply saying "Sorry old chap, didn't mean it really. Here's your legal costs and now let's forget the whole thing ever happened." That plainly would not be a satisfactory way of proceeding. But in this case we know most of what happened.

The damage to Hambros and others involved is already considerable, so bad in the case of Hambros that its future as an independent investment bank must now be in doubt. The Regan affair has highlighted the desperate measures middle-ranking City banks will sometimes resort to in the search for fees and recognition. But little further retribution would be gained by pursuing the matter to the bitter end. On the other hand, another raft of regulatory red tape and rules for the City in general would be more or less guaranteed.

Obviously there will have to be disciplinary action against those shown to have breached professional standards. The City also needs urgently to examine more generally its standards of integrity and probity, a process the Bank of England and others will no doubt want to be involved in. But since nobody outside Mr Regan and his advisers and backers have been damaged by this episode, that is probably where matters ought to rest.

Launders is just the first one to get the boot

Football managers know that the writing is on the wall when the club chairman expresses his full confidence in them. Robin Launders, who parted company with Leeds United yesterday after less than a year in the chief executive's job, was afforded no such advance warning.

Indeed, the decision to "accept his resignation" after a hastily arranged meeting at the club's Elland Road ground evidently came as something of a bolt out of the blue for Mr Launders. He arrived at the club with a reputation as an effective, albeit abrasive manager, having been part of the troika associated with Manchester United's glittering success off the field as much as on it.

It was Mr Launders as finance director who was responsible for the redevelopment of the Old Trafford ground and the com-

mercialisation of the Manchester United name to the point where income from merchandising, catering and the like now comfortably exceeds gate revenues.

Since his arrival at Leeds its performance on the pitch has not exactly set the fans alight. But that is not Mr Launders' problem. The reverse takeover by Caspian provided the club with shareholders as well as supporters and whilst both went success on the field, Mr Launders came with a reputation as the wizard of the financial drible.

Like footballers themselves, however, track record is not necessarily a guarantee of future performance. Chris Akers, who chairs Caspian, has bankers as well as fans to keep happy. He wants to turn Elland Road into the Madison Square Gardens of the UK through his Project Arena - a £30m scheme to redevelop the ground into a property, leisure and multi-sports complex. Mr Launders, apart from lacking the team skills to rub along with the rest of the management, appears not to have been running at the same pace as his chairman.

It was always clear that the heaving rush towards stock market quotations by so many football clubs would produce casualties among investors. Mix in personalities of the likes of Sir John Hall at Newcastle and Mr Akers and it is a recipe for change in personnel as well. Mr Launders may be the first of the new breed of football chief executives to get the boot but he will surely not be the last.

Consumer optimism at highest level since 1980s

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Consumer confidence is back at its highest since the late 1980s, according to a new survey yesterday. Further evidence of the booming economy came from a strong pick-up in the commercial property market, although the housing market apparently paused for breath last month.

"It is eerily reminiscent of the last boom," said Geoffrey Dicks, an economist at NatWest Markets. "The good thing is that the election has come earlier in the cycle this time around, and the government will be able to

put down to the windfall gains and consumers are not seeing the Government as being responsible for these."

But he said the economy was not yet expanding on a late-1980s scale. "The connection between house prices, confidence and consumer spending, is not as strong this time around," he said.

Confidence rose fastest in the East Midlands and the North, but house price rises have been greatest in London and parts of the South-east.

There was some support for this view in mortgage lending figures published by the British Bankers' Association yesterday. Although the banks lent 10 per cent more than their recent monthly average in March, the BBA said this reflected an increase in their market share.

Tim Sweeney, director-general, said: "Overall demand for mortgage finance has been restrained somewhat." He suggested fears of higher interest rates after the election and a shortage of properties in some areas might be to blame.

The commercial property market has continued to see strong demand, according to a report from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors yesterday. Confidence in the sector was the highest since the survey began three years ago.

Graham Chase of Chase & Partners, a RICS spokesman, said: "Confidence seems to be strong across the regions." The difference between now and the late 1980s was the absence of much speculative development so far in this cycle, he said.

Despite the differences between this boom and the last one, all economists agree that the windfalls this year make for a great deal of uncertainty about how fast the economy will grow.

Mr Dicks said that even on a cautious assumption about how much of their windfalls people would spend, consumer spending would grow by 4 per cent this year. It would need to be reduced in order to head off the threat to inflation next year.

The feelgood factor is being put down to the windfall gains - David Fell, BSL director

tighten policy as soon as it is out of the way.

Consumer optimism picked up sharply across the country in the first quarter of the year, according to a survey published by Business Strategies Ltd (BSL).

The consultancy found that, thanks to the prospect of free building society shares, optimism about the economy in general and household finances had risen markedly, while concern about unemployment was falling. The balance of optimism was falling, at 24 per cent, over pessimism, at 24 per cent, was the highest since mid-1988.

The survey reported that the South-east and the northern regions would gain most from the windfalls. The former has the biggest population in the UK, while savers in Yorkshire and the North-east will benefit most from the Halifax and Northern Rock conversions.

David Fell, BSL director, said: "The feelgood factor is be-



Surrey Free Inns the fast-growing operator of 30 superpubs and café bars which change their ambience to attract daytime and evening customers is buying Richardson Inns a joint venture between Whitbread and the Richardson family. Managing director Tony Hill (left) and his colleagues hold about 10 per cent of the £50m company. Gerald Richardson (right) will join the board of SFI and invest £1m in the enlarged group. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Enterprise unveils £100m swap

Michael Harrison

Enterprise Oil yesterday unveiled a £100m asset swap with BP which will strengthen its presence in the North Sea and end its involvement in the British Gas take-or-pay saga. BP is exchanging its 43 per cent interest in the Pierce field in return for Enterprise's interests in two gas fields, Amethyst and Ravenspurn North.

The Pierce field contains an estimated 100 million barrels of oil and is due to go into production in the third quarter of next year. The asset swap will result in Enterprise becoming the operator of the field with a 74 per cent stake.

Pierce is next to the Nelson field in the central North Sea which contains an estimated 400 million barrels and is already operated by Enterprise. A spokesman said: "This asset swap sits

very happily with our strategy of building a modern portfolio of new oil assets." The field will cost about £150m to bring on stream and involves building a floating production and storage vessel tied to wells located in two subsea centres. The go-ahead for the development is expected in the middle of the year. The other companies with an interest in Pierce are Ranger Oil, MOC Exploration, Agip and Santos.

Mark Hope, Enterprise's technical director, said: "This is good news for both companies. Enterprise will be able to maximise the potential of Pierce through our experience in the central North Sea and BP will be able to derive greater value from the assets in which they are already significant players."

The asset swap will increase BP's interest in Amethyst to 45.4 per cent and in Ravenspurn North to 33.5 per cent.

Sudden upswing pushes PEP sales to new high

Nic Cicuttii
Personal Finance Editor

A last-minute surge of investments during the few days before the end of the 1996-97 tax year helped sales of PEPs reach record heights, according to figures released yesterday by the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds (Autif).

Net PEP sales reached £6.2bn in the year to April, up 44 per cent on the previous 12 months, Autif said. Net PEP sales in the first quarter of this

year reached £1.9bn, below the record £2bn figure for sales during the second quarter of last year.

However, a final flood of £797m into unit trust PEPs in the first few days of April helped push the annual total to its record high.

Philip Warland, director general at Autif, said: "PEP sales continue to reach new heights. Sales just for March were on a par with the total for the whole of 1992. The growth in the number of regular savings plan

holders shows that the use of unit trusts is becoming part of the nation's savings habits."

"Investors need transparent, simple investment products with good performance and unit trust PEPs are able to match these needs perfectly."

The sudden upswing in sales followed concern among fund managers that despite a massive advertising push in the weeks prior to the 5 April tax deadline, investors were refusing to commit themselves to equity investments.

Fears over US interest rate rises and their potential impact on US and UK equity markets were cited as reasons for investors' reluctance to commit themselves. The looming general election was also said to have caused the initial go-slow.

However, a last-minute sales push helped convince many that direct equity investment was the long-term answer to safer but low interest rates. Net retail sales of £1.075bn, those bought by small investors, more than doubled in March

from £483m in February. They also rose from £1.025bn in March 1996.

By contrast, however, unit trust sales to institutions dropped £596m to barely £300m in March, compared to the near £900m in sales recorded the previous month. Some 40 per cent of that went into the international growth sector, while there was a net outflow of £45m from European funds.

Autif said yesterday that a significant slice of sales in March were in the UK growth and UK

growth and income sectors, which company sales force contributed £122m and independent financial advisers all told more than doubled their previous record to £75m.

However, funds which track the performance of the FTSE world, the 100 or All-Share indexes to 100 per cent of the £204bn in the APF poured into the growth and income sector, confirming the off the last year's dominance of the cash and bond funds. PEPs sold over the telephone boom, a growing number of companies, including Virgin.

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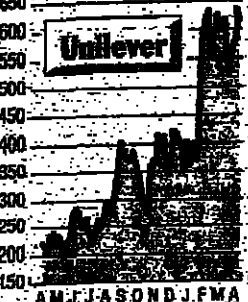
market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100	4389.7	+20.0
FTSE 250	4494.2	-4.3
FTSE 350	2150.4	+7.4
SEAQ VOLUME	678.1m shares	
52,074 bargains		
Gifts Index	93.63	+0.17

Share spotlight

share price, pence



P&G presentation could kick Unilever off the stage

Every so often Procter & Gamble bemuses the stock market by holding a City investment presentation. Such an event, expected today, invariably prompts talk of the US detergent behemoth, not quoted in London, is planning to swoop on a UK enterprise.

Reckitt & Colman, the household toiletries group where many suspect Unilever nurses predatory ambitions, could be in P&G's sights. Unilever, the Anglo Dutch food and soaps giant, has clearly grown beyond the reach of the Ariel to Fairy group.

Such is the fierce competition between P&G and Unilever that some wonder whether the Americans are merely intent on upstaging Unilever, due to produce first-quarter figures on Friday. Many believe the US group just wants to emphasise its UK presence and underline its ability to strike at a target, if it so desires.

Unilever appeared to be untroubled by the prospect of its deadly rival hobnobbing with City fund managers and analysts. Its shares were unchanged at 1,623.5p, near their peak. Reckitt dipped 7p to 830.5p.

Blue chips, swayed again by New York, were on form with Footsie gaining 20 points to 4,389.7. The supporting FTSE 250 index was rather less enthusiastic. On the surface it looked a fairly active session. But in reality the market was merely marking time with tiddlers like Dragon Oil (3.5p) and Minmet (5.5p) making a near 10 per cent contribution to volume.

Financials, seen as relatively immune from the expected Government change, once again were the major influences behind Footsie's romp. The underweight position of many fund managers was the other consideration. Once Hal-



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

ifax and the rest have followed Alliance & Leicester onto the market many funds are likely, under their own articles, to be short of financial shares. So the desire to quickly increase representation in the financial sector, be it banks or insurances, is understandable.

The banks once again stormed ahead, led by Lloyds TSB with a 19p gain to 576p. Insurances joined the romp. Prudential Corporation rose 15p to 591p and Legal & General 8p to 408.5p.

Cable & Wireless Communications touched 306.5p, closing at 299.5p. The result of a four-way merger it is the na-

tion's second-largest telephone company and largest cable operation with a value of around £4.5bn. Cable & Wireless greeted its offspring with a 7.5p gain to 479p.

Hambros, the merchant bank, still suffering from a profit warning, climbed 3.5p to 210.5p following support from BZW and ABN Amro Hoare Govett.

Williams Holdings jumped 15p to 333p after the Department of Trade & Industry cleared its bid for Chubb Security, up 22.5p to 447.5p.

Caspian, the Leeds United group run by Chris Akers, fell 2p to 26.5p (against a year's high of 46.75p) as Robin Lauder, ex-Manchester United finance director, quit as chief executive. His departure occurs as Borden Leisure, the old Mosaic Investments which acquired Bolton Wanderers, is due to return to market. Mosaic was suspended at 53p; the shares could kick off today at 75p.

TLC, the old Thorn Lighting, was little changed at 112p as Wassall, the ambitious conglomerate, lifted its stake to 5.6 per cent.

Quality Care Homes jumped 3p to 311p after saying a bid loomed. Two years ago chairman Duncan Banatyan rejected an offer from Sun Health, a US company. He has around half of the capital. Raine, the builder, firmed 0.25p to 19.25p as Alfred McAlpine emerged as the likely bidder.

Another profit warning lowered WEW, the retailer, 2.5p to 16.5p; BSM, blaming the written element of the driving test, reversed 38p to 103.5p after signalling profit problems. Shield Diagnostic continued to feel the impact of director sales, falling 47.5p to 480p.

Partners, a stationery chain placed at 150p, rose to 169.5p. Epic Multimedia put on 3p to 20p on its Abbey National link.

Dragon Oil remained the in-demand share, gaining 0.75p to 3.5p with turnover hitting almost 55 million. Still with around 5.5 billion shares in issue there is plenty of scope for trading the stock. Like so many tertiary oils there are, now it is on the move, a variety of stories flying around; they include bullish talk about its Thailand prospect and growing optimism over the likely returns from its Caspian Sea strike. In August the shares were 1p.

Taking Stock

Each week Emerald Energy, the oil hopeful, issues a statement about its drilling in Colombia. The idea is to prevent the rumour mill sending out what could be false signals. But mobile telephones may be heating the company. Chairman Iain Alexander believes handsets from the depth of the Colombian jungle are providing the City with more frequent progress reports than the weekly one offered by Emerald. Whether radio phones were in action yesterday is not yet clear but Emerald jumped 0.75p to 5.75p in busy trading. The company's communiqué is due tomorrow.

VFC, supplying film equipment for such shows as *Coronation Street* and *Rak Practice*, held at 38.5p as stockbroker Ellis & Partners forecast profits this year would top £1m against £266,000.

Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic Beverages	Price	Change
Alcoholic Beverages	Price	Change

Banks, Merchant

Banks, Merchant	Price	Change
Banks, Merchant	Price	Change

Banks, Retail

Banks, Retail	Price	Change
Banks, Retail	Price	Change

Diversified Industrials

Diversified Industrials	Price	Change
Diversified Industrials	Price	Change

Breweries, Pubs & Rest

Breweries, Pubs & Rest	Price	Change
Breweries, Pubs & Rest	Price	Change

Electricity

Electricity	Price	Change
Electricity	Price	Change

Building/Construction

Building/Construction	Price	Change
Building/Construction	Price	Change

Electronics

Electronics	Price	Change
Electronics	Price	Change

Food Manufacturers

Food Manufacturers	Price	Change
Food Manufacturers	Price	Change

Gas Distribution

Gas Distribution	Price	Change
Gas Distribution	Price	Change

Health Care

Health Care	Price	Change
Health Care	Price	Change

Household Goods

Household Goods	Price	Change
Household Goods	Price	Change

Insurance

Insurance	Price	Change
Insurance	Price	Change

Investment Funds

Investment Funds	Price	Change
Investment Funds	Price	Change

Life Assurance

Life Assurance	Price	Change
Life Assurance	Price	Change

Media

Media	Price	Change
Media	Price	Change

Mining

Mining	Price	Change
Mining	Price	Change

Oil

Oil	Price	Change
Oil	Price	Change

Distributors

Distributors	Price	Change
Distributors	Price	Change

Engineering Vehicles

Engineering Vehicles	Price	Change
Engineering Vehicles	Price	Change

Extractive Industries

Extractive Industries	Price	Change
Extractive Industries	Price	Change

Investment Companies

Investment Companies	Price	Change
Investment Companies	Price	Change

Leisure & Hotels

Leisure & Hotels	Price	Change
Leisure & Hotels	Price	Change

Pharmaceuticals

Pharmaceuticals	Price	Change
Pharmaceuticals	Price	Change

Printing & Paper

Printing & Paper	Price	Change
Printing & Paper	Price	Change

Retailers, General

Retailers, General	Price	Change
Retailers, General	Price	Change

Retailers, Food

Retailers, Food	Price	Change
Retailers, Food	Price	Change

Retailers, Textiles & Apparel

Retailers, Textiles & Apparel	Price	Change
Retailers, Textiles & Apparel	Price	Change

Retailers, Tobacco

Retailers, Tobacco	Price	Change
Retailers, Tobacco	Price	Change

Retailers, Transport

Retailers, Transport	Price	Change
Retailers, Transport	Price	Change

Retailers, Water

Retailers, Water	Price	Change
Retailers, Water	Price	Change

Rights Issues

Rights Issues	Price	Change
Rights Issues	Price	Change

Recent Issues

Recent Issues	Price	Change
Recent Issues	Price	Change

Support Services

Support Services	Price	Change
Support Services	Price	Change

Telecommunications

Telecommunications	Price	Change
Telecommunications	Price	Change

Textiles & Apparel

Textiles & Apparel	Price	Change
Textiles & Apparel	Price	Change

Tobacco

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Yield	Price	Change

Squalls face world's role model

We are preoccupied this week, for obvious reasons, with the balance sheet of the market reforms of the previous 18 years - the pluses and the minuses of economic policy of nearly two decades. One of the points frequently made is that there is now an Anglo-American economic model of capitalism significantly different from the continental European ones, or from the Japanese.

And while the Anglo-American system seems to be gaining ground internationally in the sense that many of its facets are being adopted by continental Europe and Japan, it would be astounding were there not some kind of backlash. Here in Britain, we may see some of that backlash this week: not just a change of political direction, but at least some hopes among many voters of a change in economic direction too. But in the US there is nothing of this. Administrations change, but the economic model is virtually unquestioned. Why?



Hamish McRae

While the Anglo-American system seems to be gaining ground in the sense that many of its facets are being adopted elsewhere it would be astounding were there not some kind of backlash

One part of the answer must surely lie in the success of the US economy in creating jobs. By comparison to continental Europe the UK has been relatively successful at getting its unemployment rate down, and it is now creating jobs at a reasonable rate. But it is nothing like as impressive an engine of job-creation as the US.

In the past six years the US has created 12.5 million new jobs, an increase of more than 11 per cent. A little over 1 million were in the public sector, and the largest single new group were in private sector services, mostly in small and medium-sized firms. The growth of the past decade is shown in the chart on the right.

But there have been no net new jobs in manufacturing. Of course there have been some new manufacturing jobs, but gains have been more than offset by losses with the result that total manufacturing employment is below the level of 1991. No new jobs and rising output has resulted in excellent productivity gains, since 1991 averaging around 4 per cent. Output per person/hour in manufacturing in the US is 21 per cent higher than it was in 1991. The result of this is that unit labour

costs have hardly risen since 1991 (see left-hand chart). The economy as a whole has created jobs without creating excessive inflation. This raises a number of questions. One, posed by the economic team at Kleinwort Benson, which

dug out the statistics noted above, is whether this performance can continue. They believe it can. The present growth will slow and so will wage pressures, but it is contained. And the productivity gains will continue. If that is right, and the good US performance is not largely a cyclical phenomenon - the result of a long expansion - then expect facets of the US economy to continue to be exported into the Continent and Japan.

But that is the American part of the model. What about the "Anglo" bit? One part of the market reforms embraced by Britain but not by the US is reform of the state sector, in particular privatisation. The US did not privatise because not having nationalised in the first place, it didn't need to. That will clearly continue outside the UK, and perhaps within it. (One of the reasons for the early election in France is to seek voter support not just for the single currency but also for continuation of the privatisation programme, which has been pushed back by opposition from the left.)

Whether other features of the Anglo-American system continue, like reliance on stock market finance rather than bank finance and flexible labour markets, will depend on whether the two economies continue to be perceived from abroad as successes. If they continue to grow faster than continental Europe and Japan - if the present performance is not just a cyclical phenomenon - they presumably will. If the European economies catch up, the model will come to be less admired.

Medium- and long-term forecasts of growth are either brave or useless, or perhaps both. But I was interested by some numbers in the annual "Strategy 2000" exercise carried out by BZW, which tries to apply a long-term view to investment. The logic of this is to try and look at which countries and which sectors will do well over the next few years, and then to draw investment conclusions from that.

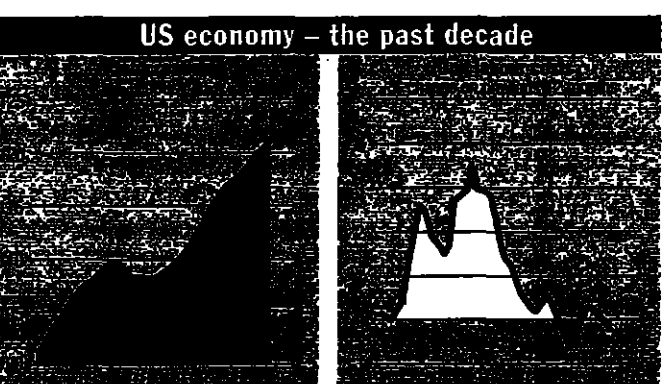
As part of this exercise, BZW did two things. One was to come up with some five-year growth forecasts; the other to put a whole series of variables together, from demography to scientific achievement, and see what that implied for living standards.

On the forecasts, the Group of Seven order ran as follows: Canada (3.2 per cent trend growth), Japan (2.8 per cent), US and UK (2.5 per cent), Italy (2.4 per cent), and France and Germany (2.2 per cent).

That is quite interesting in the sense that the US and UK do come out a touch higher than the large continental economies, but the margin is small and in any case Canada and Japan do better.

On the less precise assessment of changes in living standards, though, the US and UK come out clearly top, while at the bottom come Japan and Germany. The criteria are: changes in the dependency ratio, imports of capital goods, access to information, labour market flexibility and number of scientific citations. These may seem an arbitrary set of variables, and of course they are. Nevertheless the results are interesting in the sense that the Anglo-American model appears the best at generating a rise in living standards - or rather the most likely to generate a rise - over the next decade.

What should one conclude from all this? I think the main message is there is still great momentum in the intellectual sea-change which took place during the early 1980s on how developed economies should be run, and that accordingly the Anglo-American model will continue to be applied elsewhere. That is not to claim that the model is optimal; rather it is to say that the onus is on the opponents to come up with something better. If they don't, the model rolls on.



Chip off the old block had an auspicious start to life

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Made to last: A example of Chippendale's work

I had not realised until now that Sir Chips Keswick, chairman of Hambros Bank, got his Christian name because he was conceived on a Chippendale.

Whether this was a Chippendale chaise-longue or chair is not clear, although I am happy to provide a picture of an example of the 18th-Century master craftsman's handiwork. Who knows, this may be the very chair.

Andrew Regan's failed bid for the Co-op throws up other strange stories. The two corporate financiers who opposed each other in the bid battle once worked with each other, or at least for the same bank.

Peter Large, the Hambros man who advised Mr Regan on the bid, was until September 1995 the managing director of SBC Warburg's corporate finance arm. This was just after the merger of SG Warburg and SBC in July 1995. And of course Brian Keelan, who has been advising the Co-op during the fracas, has been with SBC since 1989. He is now managing director of corporate finance at the merged bank.

With Mr Keelan victorious and Mr Large awaiting the outcome of the various enquiries into the Regan affair, I wonder if the former colleagues will still be exchanging Christmas cards this year.

Apicms, the Association of Private Client Investment Managers & Stockbrokers, has announced the retirement of founder chairman John Cobb and appointment of his successor, Michael Read of Greig Middleton.

Mr Cobb, 65, said yesterday: "Since our founding seven years ago, we have fought many battles on major issues such as Taurus, Rolling Settlement and Crest. We have opposed the excesses of the regulators, have promoted our members' services and defended their interest in an institutionally-dominated world."

Mr Read, 54, is a founder director of Greig Middleton, now the UK's largest retail stockbroker. He heads the investment management department, with £7.5bn under management.

ton, commander of the allied forces arrayed against Napoleon, Ponsoby's leg was blown off by a cannonball. Looking down he exclaimed: "By God Sir, I've lost my leg."

To which the Iron Duke, unperturbed, replied: "By God Sir, so you have."

I believe another Ponsoby ancestor participated in the Charge of the Light Brigade, although I expect the dialogue wasn't quite as good. No doubt the present Mr Ponsoby's efforts will be more successful, if not so glorious.

He is also the fifth generation of his family to be a stockbroker. Hopefully this will help him deal with the expected avalanche of share deals from the current spurge of building society flotations.

My thanks to Barry Lloyd of Saf-ron Waldon, Essex, for the following missive: "I noted that in the party political broadcast by Tony Blair he made coffee in his kitchen in a Cable TV industry mug."

"Is the Labour Party now accepting product placements and if so was this not rather misplaced considering Mr Blair has promised his support to BT?"

Mathew Ponsoby, senior associate director of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, is in charge of the Halifax flotation. Future shareholders may like to know that he has a distinguished heritage.

One of Mr Ponsoby's ancestors was a cavalry officer at the Battle of Waterloo. Sitting on his horse near the Duke of Well-

"The Romance of Buried Treasure" is a fascinating chapter from *The Art of Speculation*, a book by Wall Street investment guru Philip L. Carret.

It was obviously written with recent mining share scandals such as Bro-X in mind, where thousands of investors lost out when mining investments went wrong.

Mr Carret writes: "Victims of the financial underworld, the proverbial widows and orphans who place their funds in worthless securities, are prone to select mining and oil stocks as the vehicles of their misfortune. There is undeniably a certain glamour about the adventure of extracting its mineral wealth from the earth's crust."

The book was written in 1930 and is being reissued as an investment classic. As far as throwing money at holes in the ground goes, however, it proves that nothing changes.

United News & Media has promoted Gerry Wilton chief executive of its broking companies, Harlow Butler and Garban. In addition to his previous responsibilities for the broking businesses in Europe and Asia he will now add the businesses in North and South America. Although Lord Hollick's company may be best known for its *Express* newspaper titles, it also owns the largest integrated money and securities broking group in the world.

John Willcock

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark
US	1.6284	1.6284	1.6284	1.6284
Canada	0.6918	0.6918	0.6918	0.6918
Germany	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564
France	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564
Italy	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564
Japan	0.0071	0.0071	0.0071	0.0071
Netherlands	0.6366	0.6366	0.6366	0.6366
Sweden	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564
Switzerland	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564
UK	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564	0.6564

Interest Rates

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
US	5.00%	UK	5.00%
Germany	4.75%	France	4.75%
Italy	4.75%	Japan	4.75%
Netherlands	4.75%	Sweden	4.75%
Switzerland	4.75%	Canada	4.75%

Bond Yields

Country	Yield	Country	Yield
US	5.00%	UK	5.00%
Germany	4.75%	France	4.75%
Italy	4.75%	Japan	4.75%
Netherlands	4.75%	Sweden	4.75%
Switzerland	4.75%	Canada	4.75%

Money Market Rates

Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
3 month	3 month	3 month	3 month
6 month	6 month	6 month	6 month
1 year	1 year	1 year	1 year

Tourist Rates

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
US	1.6284	UK	0.6564
Germany	0.6564	France	0.6564
Italy	0.6564	Japan	0.0071
Netherlands	0.6366	Sweden	0.6564
Switzerland	0.6564	Canada	0.6918

Life Financial Futures

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Est/Cont	Open Interest
Long	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Short	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Industrial Metals

Aluminum	Volume	Price
1000	1000	1000
2000	2000	2000

Other Spot Rates

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
US	1.6284	UK	0.6564
Germany	0.6564	France	0.6564
Italy	0.6564	Japan	0.0071
Netherlands	0.6366	Sweden	0.6564
Switzerland	0.6564	Canada	0.6918

Latest Unit Trust Prices

Unit	Price	Unit	Price
100	100.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	400	400.00

Commodity Indices

Index	Value	Index	Value
100	100.00	200	200.00
300	300.00	400	400.00

Financial Times Information

Financial Times Information provides online information from over 5,000 business sources comprising 43 million documents, as well as a database of 3.5 million securities and fundamental data on quoted companies.

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fleet & executive cars

With traffic issues taking a back seat in the election campaign, John Blauth finds it's a good time to make a purchase

A driving force the politicians forget

Sales of new cars have slowed right down: private buyers are putting off purchasing until they feel more confident about the realities of life under a newly elected government. Businesses are easing up because the staff expansion that led to big sales surges earlier this year have also tended to go on hold.

Nevertheless, life in the world of new cars has rarely been busier. New models are being launched weekly while updates of existing ones fill in the gaps between.

Manufacturers are edging back into the discounting game and offering dealers bonuses for registering cars early in their attempts to claim market penetration positions which are meaningless to their customers. Of far greater importance to the car buying and driving public is the current debate on car usage.

We are steadily approaching national gridlock as too many cars chase too few yards of road.

The argument of the final few years of the decade is what is going to be done to solve this problem?

In the 1960s we were promised a motorway network of at least 6,000 miles. Today, with a total car population approaching 24 million, we have fewer than 3,000 miles.

This is one of the forgotten facts in the anti-car, anti-roads war which is waging in nearly every available media forum. Facts have been replaced by populist sound bites, ignorance and, in the case of most political utterances on the subject, crass stupidity.

The UK, in common with every other western economy, travels by car; those 23 million-plus cars are driven by people – voters for the most part – and they are used for vital tasks that include getting to and from work, in the course of work and, equally importantly, for leisure. If the car and the industry that supports it were to disappear,

Britain would simply cease to function.

Congestion is the sole problem we face. Today's car is clean, well built, safe and generally reliable. The industry that supports our motoring habit is better trained and better regulated than most.

But too many cars and insufficient road space remain the great conundrum: improved, cheap, even free, public transport is clearly not the answer because trains and buses do not operate from where you are to where you want to go. You have to get to them, and therein lies their great flaw. For the salesman, repairman, engineer or parent delivering school child, the car remains the only sensible, logical and efficient option.

This, in turn, leads to the inescapable conclusion that we need more roads to cope with the needs of the people. It's either that or self-denial by some so that the others of us can



Taken for a ride? Vital problems of congestion remain untackled by the two main parties

ride. Who is willing to take the first step?

As the election looms, this issue – which affects the vast majority of UK citizens – remains untackled and unanswered. The issues encompass practical policies and costs and neither of the two main contenders have statements of consequence to make on either. It is left to the hopefuls in the Green and Liberal Democrat parties to get off the fence.

The Labour manifesto devotes five paragraphs to road transport and cites an "integrated transport policy" as one of its pledges. This is neither defined nor explained and the only specific is that there will be

a strategic review of road-building requirements.

The Conservative manifesto, equally short on the subject, says that the party will encourage the manufacture of more fuel-efficient cars and will aim to reduce road congestion by reducing the current 33 police control centres with five regional control centres instead.

In other words, nothing new, nothing radical and nothing to sort out the problems.

In contrast the Liberal Democrats plan to add 4p per litre in fuel tax and hit 1.6-litre and over cars with road tax of £145 while those with smaller engines will pay just £10. The party also plans to introduce road pricing in congested areas (which may, of course, move the congestion to cheaper avenues).

The Green Party plans to introduce much higher fuel taxation to encourage what it calls "mileage-consciousness" among drivers. It is also in favour of 20mph speed limits in

some city areas, along with traffic-calming measures and a national 55mph speed limit.

Too many votes in it, is the general view, to do anything radical about traffic and congestion. But one thing is clear: whoever takes over at No 10 on Friday, the cost of motoring will rise ahead of inflation for some years to come.

Meanwhile, this is a good time to acquire your new car. The motor trade will bite your arm off with eagerness, offering discounts, finance deals and trade-in deals. The bargains are all from the lower and upper medium sector of the market; the upper end, where Mercedes holds court with Jaguar, BMW, Audi, Saab and Volvo has seen growth this year but no one expects this trend to last.

Generally the outlook is gloomy in the short- and medium-term, with only civic manufacturers looking remotely cheerful. Repairs, it seems, will always be with us.



Contract hire may be the new way to run a Vauxhall Vectra

Your new car that you will never own

Martin Derrick

The UK has Europe's most sophisticated and advanced automotive contract hire and leasing industry, but it has not been an outstanding success at getting its message over.

Ask any senior executive in the industry and they will tell you, hand on heart, that a finance director or fleet manager who has not seriously looked into the benefits and advantages of contract hire or leasing is simply not doing their job. For virtually every fleet, they will argue, there is at least one specialised package that will result in greater choice, more efficiency, lower cost, improved security, and even improved employee satisfaction.

And yet only around 50 per cent of Britain's businesses running company cars are currently enjoying the peace of mind that comes from being able to budget fleet costs accurately, benefiting from lower costs thanks to the contract hire industry's buying power, or enjoying the fruits of the industry's experience and expertise.

So if the business community is still sitting on the contract hire fence, is it any wonder that the vast majority of private car buyers are also still treading the road of bank loans and HP when it comes to financing their latest set of wheels?

To be fair to Joe Public, he or she suffers the added indignity of being unable to recover VAT on monthly rentals, so the cost can look frighteningly steep. Yet there is a growing belief in the contract hire industry that there is a potential goldmine in personal contract hire of one sort or another. Initially, the concept is likely to spring from within the corporate sector – businesses, in effect, organising contract hire for employees who have chosen to take a cash alternative, or for employees not eligible for a company car.

Lex Vehicle Leasing, the UK's largest contract hire company, launched a Personal Contract Purchase (PCP) scheme in January this year, called Lex FreeChoice. It has set target of 400 cars this year from employees of companies which are already its big fleet customers.

The first customer to go live was LucasVarity, which already has 1,800 cars on contract hire from Lex and which is now offering FreeChoice to all its employees. But the biggest customer is likely to be BT, which is to offer all its 250,000 employees and pensioners the opportunity to take out their own PCP.

To avoid tax problems, Lex

spent more than £25,000 getting specialist advice and the scheme has been signed off by the Inland Revenue, but marketing director Richard Koster warns that there can be dangers: "Bringing a PCP scheme to the market is very complex and we recommend that employers look closely at a product before taking it on board. We at least recommend taking advice from your local tax office."

Under the scheme, employees pay a fixed monthly fee for 24 or 36 months and can then either make a final payment and keep the car, or else hand the car back and start a new contract.

A similar scheme has been launched by Lease Plan UK, called Freedomrive. Under it, private buyers can enjoy all the benefits of contract hire, including accident management, a replacement vehicle, maintenance and even insurance, all for a fixed monthly rental.

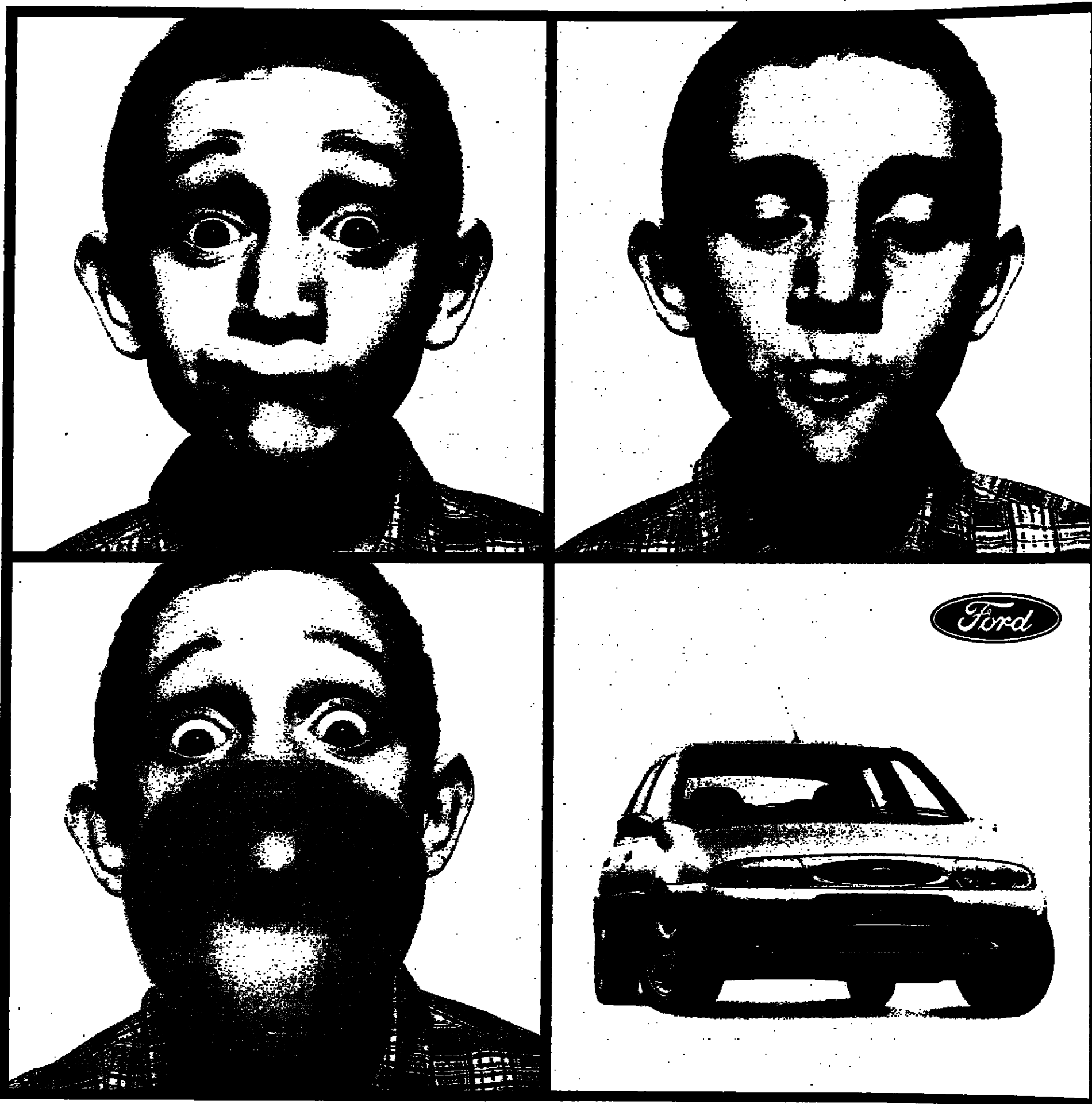
"It's a tax neutral option and it gives individuals access to our organisation, infrastructure and buying power," said Steve Dunn, commercial director at Lease Plan. "I don't believe that personal car leasing is top of many people's minds yet, but increasingly human resources departments are asking for more flexible benefit packages – and this is where a PCP scheme can count. It's an idea whose time is just about to come."

The major motor manufacturers have also recognised the need to offer new finance packages to customers. For example, Citroën has Elect 3 and Ford has both Acumen personal leasing and Options personal contract purchase plans.

The schemes have been set up in preparation for a change in personal buying habits – if the British public can be persuaded to follow the example set by US buyers. There, leasing consumer goods has been normal activity for the past 30 years. In the UK, it will take a major culture change for people to understand that they can drive a brand new car every two or three years, at reasonable cost but without ever owning the asset.

The motor manufacturers, almost all of which have now set up personal contract purchase and personal contract hire schemes, clearly believe that radical change in mind-set is going to happen.

But if it is proving so difficult to persuade those responsible for around half of Britain's company cars that it is in their interests to switch to contract hire or leasing, it may be a very long time before private buyers here change en masse to the American way of leasing.



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People carriers get a shrinking feeling

Martin Derrick

A couple of years ago, if you wanted an MPV – or multi-purpose vehicle – you chose a Renault Espace. Renault didn't exactly invent the concept of the people carrier – though it likes to let people think it did. That honour probably goes to Fiat, whose Multipla model of the 1960s showed how six adults could be seated in a small vehicle by the simple expedient of raising the roof and fitting three rows of seats.

Renault's breakthrough with the original Espace was to provide those same three rows of seats but in a vehicle that offered a heady combination of style, comfort and safety features. It also promised flexibility of use, with seven seats able to be removed or refitted at will, folded down to make tables, and even swivelled around to face each other. Demand was im-

mediate and strong – despite the fact that with seven seats fitted, there was virtually no luggage space whatsoever – and a new market niche, the MPV sector, had been created. Though Toyota, Nissan and Mitsubishi got into the MPV act quite quickly, the European manufacturers adopted a watching brief for some years and then all together decided in the early 1990s that MPVs were an essential element in their model line-ups. In 1995 the jointly developed Ford Galaxy, Volkswagen Sharan and Seat Alhambra were launched – identical vehicles with different names. The same year, another joint venture saw the Peugeot 806, Citroen Synergie, Fiat Ulysse and Lancia Z launched – again, identical vehicles – though the Lancia was never marketed in the UK.

Even then, there was no slowing up in the breathless pace of new MPV launches: the Mercedes-Benz V-Class and Honda Shuttle joined the fray in 1996 and in the past few months an all-new Renault Espace, the American Chrysler Voyager, the American-built Vauxhall Sintra, the smaller Toyota Picnic, smaller still Renault Scenic and smallest of all Daihatsu Move and Suzuki Wagon R+ have all been revealed.



Space age: there is room for six people and their luggage in the neat, easy to manoeuvre Toyota Picnic

Is there really a need – or indeed a demand – for all these new MPVs? Richard Mackay, managing director of Chrysler Jeep UK, is adamant that there is still room for new players, and he argues, especially for the Voyager. Since its original launch in the USA in 1983, over six million Chrysler Voyagers have been sold around the globe. "Yes, there are plenty of competitors to choose from, but just how many can claim to be the world's first proper MPV?

Just how many can claim to be the world's best-selling MPV? And just how many can lay claim to that magic ingredient: the Voyager heritage?" he asks. The Voyager – and more particularly the long-wheelbase Grand Voyager – are very big vehicles, offering more than just seven seats: they have loads of luggage space too. In this respect, the Voyagers are among the more practical MPVs on offer. But not everyone needs acres of space and some manufacturers are beginning to develop what at first sounds something of a contradiction in terms – smaller MPVs.

Toyota's Picnic, for example, offers comfort and space for six plus their luggage in a compact package that is neat, simple to manoeuvre and easy to park. And Renault has taken the idea a step further with the Scenic, designed to seat five adults in the sort of comfort and style that a traditional saloon or estate cannot match.

But the Japanese have taken downsizing to, perhaps, extremes with both Daihatsu and Suzuki announcing micro-MPVs, bizarre-looking boxes on wheels that seat five or six in a vehicle the length of a Metro or Fiesta. Suzuki's Wagon R+ is developed from the Japanese Wagon R. It looks very similar to Daihatsu's Move, although demand is immutable. In the year following the Galaxy launch, Ford alone registered more MPVs than all the other manufacturers put together had in the previous 12 months. At the same time, a whole host of other manufacturers launched their own all-new MPVs.

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	OTR List Price (£)	Depreciation (£)	Fuel Cost (£)	Finance Cost (£)	SMR Cost (£)	Insurance Cost (£)	Total Cost (£)	PPM
Fiesta 1.3i Encore 3 dr	8,440	4,070	4,120	1,760	1,220	900	12,070	20.1
Corsa 1.2i Merit 3 dr	8,195	4,100	4,052	1,710	1,335	855	12,052	20.1
Renault Clio 1.2 RL 3 dr	8,240	4,560	3,817	1,735	1,335	855	12,302	20.5
Citroen Saxo 1.1i SX 3 dr	8,765	4,680	3,717	1,874	1,330	1,065	12,666	21.1
VW Polo 1.0L 3 dr	7,990	4,490	3,570	1,798	1,285	900	12,043	20.1
Fiesta 1.25i LX 16V 5 dr	10,395	5,120	4,120	2,165	1,115	1,065	13,585	22.6
Corsa 1.4i LS 5 dr	9,890	5,050	4,476	2,059	1,375	900	13,860	23.1
Citroen Saxo 1.4i SX 5 dr	9,810	5,220	4,052	2,097	1,420	1,245	14,034	23.4
VW Polo 1.4 CL 5 dr	10,520	6,370	3,886	2,367	1,425	1,065	15,113	25.2
Peugeot 106 XR 1.4 5 dr	10,915	6,050	4,062	2,295	1,475	1,335	15,217	25.4
Fiesta 1.8D LX 5 dr	10,665	5,570	3,810	2,221	1,410	1,065	14,076	23.5
Renault Clio 1.9D Club Med	10,320	5,620	3,868	2,232	1,560	1,065	14,345	23.9
Peugeot 106 XRD 1.5 5 dr	10,915	6,100	3,010	2,295	1,515	1,245	14,165	23.6
VW Polo 1.9D CL 5 dr	10,795	6,350	3,585	2,430	1,605	1,065	15,035	25.1
Citroen Saxo 1.5D VSX 5 dr	10,485	5,560	3,310	2,241	1,565	1,245	13,921	23.2
Fiesta 1.4i Si 16V 3 dr	11,385	5,930	4,476	2,369	1,185	1,335	15,295	25.5
Corsa 1.4i Sport 16V 3 dr	11,465	6,050	4,476	2,385	1,435	1,245	15,591	26.0
VW Polo 1.4 16V 3 dr	12,265	7,520	4,201	2,761	1,620	1,650	17,752	29.6
Fiat Punto 1.6 Sporting 3 dr	10,671	5,690	4,886	2,282	1,635	1,335	15,828	26.4
Fiesta 1.25i Ghia 16V 5 dr	11,705	6,020	4,120	2,435	1,115	1,245	14,935	24.9
Corsa 1.4i GLS 16V 5 dr	11,645	6,270	4,476	2,423	1,400	1,245	15,814	26.4
Renault Clio 1.4i RT 5 dr	11,215	6,510	4,296	2,421	1,405	1,065	15,697	26.2
VW Polo 1.6 GL 5 dr	11,755	7,210	4,737	2,646	1,565	1,335	17,493	29.2
Fiesta 1.4i Ghia X 16V 5 dr	12,955	6,780	4,476	2,696	1,175	1,335	16,462	27.4
Corsa 1.4i CDX 16V 5 dr	12,720	6,810	4,536	2,646	1,400	1,245	16,637	27.7
Renault Clio 1.8 RSi 3 dr	12,840	6,850	4,971	2,723	1,705	1,800	18,049	30.1
VW Polo 1.4 16V 5 dr	12,730	7,780	4,201	2,864	1,620	1,650	18,115	30.2

3 years, 60,000 Miles

OTR LIST PRICE is the recommended list price with delivery and road tax. DEPRECIATION is the difference between the projected value and invoice cost after allowing for any dealer/fleet discount. FUEL costs worked out using £2.85/gallon for unleaded and £2.94/gallon for diesel, together with the EC 93/116 combined fuel consumption figure (where available); otherwise a weighted average of the old figures is used. FINANCE a notional flat interest charge of 22.5% over 3 years, applied to the invoice price. SMR likely cost of routine servicing, tyre replacements, brake pads/linings, VAT, RAC or equivalent cover, and renewal of road tax. INSURANCE likely cost of 3 years premiums using ABI Groupings. TOTAL and PPM total cost over 3 years and cost per mile in pence.

Source: Emmerson Hill Associates



For more information call the Ford Business Centre on 0345 23 23 23
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Challenge to the company favourites

Russell Hayes

The heartland of fleet car sales belongs to two cars and two manufacturers. The Ford Mondeo and Vauxhall Vectra are sitting pretty, but if allowed a choice the company car driver isn't starved of alternatives. The most recent challenge has been quite unexpected. The Volkswagen Passat had hitherto passed the fleet market by but the latest model, on sale since March, is creating a lot of excitement. For a start it's good looking: the rounded roof apes the new Beetle concept car and imparts plenty of headroom. Initial quality seems Mercedes-like and VW basks in the reflected glory of Audi as the Passat shares the floorpan of the A4. By taking a sharp knife to the options list, Volkswagen no longer charges a premium for a well-equipped car. Prices start at £13,995 on the road for the 1.6E but even with 100bhp many drivers will find this engine too weedy.

The fleet favourite is destined to be the £15,110 1.8S. That's if people can get hold of it. The Passat has been beset by production hold-ups while Germany fine-tunes its right-hand drive build quality. Delivery times are still over two months.

The Peugeot 406, which is getting into its first full year of sales, is great to drive, elegantly styled and roomier than most. Its turbo diesel is still class-leading and the new V6 a treat. An estate variant and the fabulous new 406 coupé can only boost sales but the sales rush hasn't happened yet.

Peter Jacob is operations development manager of GE Capital Fleet Services. His company sources 72,000 cars a year but he is surprised not to see the 406 higher up his list for 1996. "We don't penalise it in terms of running costs against its peer group and the people who run them here like them. The public marketing seems to be very good but there seems to be a hangover problem with fleets. Fleet marketing has to be amazingly perceptive and proactive."

It reinforces the conservatism of a market which Nissan has also been trying to upset with the new Primera. The car really is very good to drive and well screwed together but burdened with an exterior so bland it says nothing at all. "We can put people in a Nissan or a Honda or whatever and it's very rare to get adverse feedback, but in the end they go back to the bog-standard fleet cars," says Jacob.

Tom Stephenson, general manager of Leasecontract, agrees. His 13,000-strong fleet goes mostly to city firms and financial services. "The Nissan Primera GT is getting some enquiries," he says, "but there is still a snob value there. Ford gives comfort and a well-known name. Some drivers are more comfortable with saying they drive a Mondeo or Vectra." Of course some have their hands tied on choice. Fleet managers can appear to offer a wide choice of types of car with

the economics of one brand by going for the big names.

Vauxhall and Ford are branching into every niche market they can think of. The same can be said of Toyota, but there are still companies with anti-Japanese car policies. This is irrational, not only because the likes of Toyota, Honda and Nissan are better value and faultlessly reliable, but because the Corolla, Accord and Primera are British-built.

Brand new from Japan comes the Mitsubishi Galant: distinctive looking for the first time. It used to be a private buyer's favourite because imports were restricted but in 2000 the gentleman's agreement (a polite name for trade restriction) limiting Japanese imports to the UK ends, so UK importer Colt UK is looking at fleet sales. The Galant comes as a saloon or estate with 2.0- or 2.5-litre petrol power but no diesel. Starting from £17,210 on road, it nudges the prestige sector but engine too weedy.

Mitsubishi is claiming "whole life" costs are among the best in class – a claim supported by several leasing companies.

The baby brother of the Galant, the unfortunately named Carisma, is quoted as free, as it is built in Holland, and did good business last year. Starting from £11,890, it is good value. Its sister car, the Volvo S40, is a more aggressive front end and V40 saloon is a more aggressive rear end.

into BMW price territory but new £14,670, 1.6 S40 saloon is launched this month.

The Korean Hyundai Lantra is a minnow in the company car pond but worth a look. The smartly styled saloon lacks interior space but has just had the 137bhp, 2.0-litre engine from the coupé put under its bonnet. At £13,499 the 2.0 GSi saloon is undercuts the Mondeo 2.0 LX world, too by more than £1,000.

So what of the old favourites? The Ford Mondeo was last year's best-selling fleet car and of his last year's best-selling fleet car, it continues so far this year. A thorough revamp has put a more aggressive front end, rear end, safety was improved and its already impressive ride and handling tweaked. "It offers a rational and an emotional choice," says Nick Themistoclous, fleet marketing manager at Hertz. "It has good security, comfort and practicality but it has good looks and road presence."

Meanwhile over at Vauxhall the Vectra has also received few handling tweaks to counter criticisms of a stodgy ride even though it was only launched in 1995. An estate joined the line up last autumn but Vauxhall has played the trump card on equipment, adding the Trafficmaster, a new Oracle system to most Vectra models. This gives an audible warning of motorway jams several minutes before you hit them and is proving a big hit with fleet drivers. Vauxhall has also recently launched the Philip Carin in-car navigation system on the Vectra and Omega. For the autumn, in-car navigation looks set to be to the 1990s with the sunroof was to the 1980s only a lot more useful.



fleet & executive cars

Subaru thrives on rally pedigree

Martin Derrick

Colin McRae, who won the 1996 World Rally Championship in his Subaru Impreza, is not the only fan of the Japanese marque. Its British customers also recently showed their enthusiasm for one of Japan's smaller car makers by voting it up to the very top of this year's JD Power Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The survey put Subaru first of the 33 car makers surveyed, edging Honda and Kia into joint second place, with Daewoo fourth and Skoda best-placed European car maker in fifth.

According to Dave Sargent, director of European operations for JD Power and Associates: "Subaru owners report fewer problems than any others when they first take delivery of their vehicle. Dealers are excellent at resolving problems which do occur and they treat their customers well when they come in for service or repair. Subaru wins thanks to outstanding quality and excellent dealer service."

In the survey, Subaru scored consistently high marks throughout all the major criteria, such as customer care, warranty work and vehicle performance. And it earned the highest score among all manufacturers for "problem incidence and resolution".

Ed Swatman, managing director of Subaru (UK), commented: "We are delighted that Subaru and its dealers have been officially and independently recognised for giving customers what they value most."

"This award is as much a commendation for the Subaru technician who services the car as it is for the dealer principal

who sets out his customer care guidelines. It also proves that reliable cars need not be dull. Just ask any Impreza Turbo owner."

Finding an Impreza Turbo owner to ask may be a problem, however. Subaru, despite having been imported into the UK for 20 years by International Motors Group - which also imports Isuzu and SsangYong - still sold only around 5,600 cars last year despite boosting sales by 25 per cent. This year its target is 8,000 and it hopes to reach 10,000 by the year 2000.

Subaru is one of a number of Japanese makes which for years has been severely restricted in the number of cars it could sell in Britain because of the iniquitous quota system.

But despite only being able to import a small number of cars, Subaru carved itself an early niche in rugged and reliable four-wheel drive vehicles. These 1980s Justy hatchbacks and Legacy Estates may have lacked the style and poise of an Audi Quattro or Range Rover - the main 4x4 competitors - but the Subarus were inexpensive and, above all, thrived on hard work, often in poor conditions. Subaru earned for itself a loyal following among farmers, vets and rural doctors, for whom mobility and reliability ranked higher than image and street cred.

In recent years, however, Subaru has broadened its range to attract a wider following. Its UK line-up now starts with the Hungarian-built 1.3-litre Justy, still the only 4x4 supermini on the market. The largest seller is the mid-range Impreza, recently facelifted and given a power boost. All have full-time four-wheel drive and 2.0-litre engines, with the flagship Turbo



Customers' favourite: Subarus like the Impreza Turbo are top of the list for satisfying buyers

2000 boasting 208bhp - enough for a top speed of 143mph and acceleration from 0 to 62mph in a blistering 6.4 seconds. This is the road-going version of the car in which Subaru won the World Rally Championship the last two years, and so popular is it that waiting lists now extend to August.

At the top of the Subaru line-up comes the Legacy range of executive saloons and estates - again, all with four-wheel drive.

Most interesting is the Legacy Outback Estate, described as the world's first sport utility estate, a sort of cross between a conventional estate car and an out-and-out off-road vehicle. Essentially, it's a standard Legacy Estate but with raised and beefed-up suspension. Though in the USA 60 per cent of all Subaru sales are now Outback Estates, Swatman is rather more modest in his estimates of potential UK demand:

"We expect to sell several hundred this year, but we are now entering uncharted territory and as such could spark off a whole new market. This is a great opportunity for us."

He is also confident that Subaru's recent rally successes can only augur well for the future. "It has proven an excellent technological showcase for Subaru. Not only has it allowed us to demonstrate the reliability and durability of our all-wheel

drive system but it has graphically highlighted the active safety benefits of AWD. All in all, the World Rally Championship has done wonders for the marque."

But one thing will not change, he promises. Subaru will continue to sell through small family dealerships where customers will still enjoy a level of personal service that larger volume franchises simply cannot offer.

Survey may not reveal the true picture

The JD Power Survey has some important messages for motor manufacturers but it is by no means the last word in reliability itself, writes Martin Derrick. Its massively influential counterpart, JD Power Survey in the USA, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, is based on far more raw data and so can quantify initial quality, car appeal, used car quality and customer satisfaction.

The British survey, by contrast, is neither random nor disinterested in that it relies purely on responses from readers and viewers of BBC's *Top Gear*. Thus, while JD Power can poll every new car buyer in the USA, in Britain it can only poll those who contact the organisation - under 17,000 this year - and this could result in an over-emphasis on people who may have experienced problems with their cars (in other words, whingers) and the sort of people who fill in forms in magazines. In this respect, JD Power in the UK operates in a similar fashion to the Consumers Association - an organisation that has incurred the wrath of the motor industry for drawing conclusions from unrepresentative and usually absurdly small (i.e. statistically insignificant) samples.

Although JD Power attempts to study a number of aspects of customer satisfaction, by far the most accurate survey of car reliability published to date comes from Lex Vehicle Leasing,

Britain's largest contract hire company with over 70,000 cars on its books. It found that the most reliable cars come from Mitsubishi, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Honda and Fiat in that order. Bottom of the pile came Rover, Vauxhall, Citroën, Saab and Ford.

The value of its survey, in comparison to any other, is that it is based on actual experience, documented over (usually) three or four years and with an average of 60,000 miles per car.

But the organisations with the most information of all - the AA and the RAC, each with millions of members - both refuse to release any data. When pressed, they argue that their job is to get cars going at the roadside and that statistics would be tainted by breakdowns that were the driver's fault rather than the manufacturer's. Poor maintenance, battery problems and even running out of fuel could all adversely reflect on the make of car.

However, incidents such as these could easily be filtered from statistics. The truth is that most manufacturers now offer a year's free membership of the AA or RAC to new car buyers. That represents an enormous amount of business for the breakdown companies who are not about to jeopardise their incomes for the sake of letting the customer view the true picture...

The new Volvo C70's appearance on the silver screen heralds a revival in the fortunes of glamorous models, writes Russell Hayes

Coupé set for a superhero's comeback

When a car maker says never again it means nothing of the sort. There is no concept that cannot be revived and this summer sees a resurgence in glamorous coupés from some humdrum names.

The last swoopy Volvo was Roger Moore's P1800 in *The Saint*. Now said superhero has returned in the shape of Val Kilmer, driving the new Volvo C70, which has had far better reviews than the film. Driven by a 2.3-litre, five-cylinder turbo engine, it crowns the company's turnaround from housebrick shapes. At around £35,000 when it goes on sale in September, the C70 will be unattainable for most, especially as only 200 will be imported this year (and about 50 have already been sold purely on the strength of press reports). However, a less gadget-laden sub-£30,000 car is on the cards.

Volvo is aiming straight at BMW and Mercedes but neither will be caught napping. BMW's 3-Series Coupé continues as the No 1 best seller despite its conservative lines and Mercedes continues to surprise with the CLK, a four-seat, 3.2-litre, V6 coupé on sale in June. Its radical four-head-amp style - borrowed from the E-Class - is miles away from the sedate E-Class coupé it replaces. Based on the C-Class, the CLK is slightly smaller than the Volvo C70 but stuffed with technology

and cheaper at £25,000 to £35,000.

One price-rung down but possibly the best-looking of the lot is Peugeot's new 406 Coupé. It is blessed with a shape from Italian stylist Pininfarina, which also pens Ferraris. Peugeot UK has announced prices if you'd care to place orders, but there are no demonstrator cars available yet. Choose from the 2.0-litre, 135bhp, four-cylinder or the new, super smooth 194bhp, 3.0-litre, V6. Prices start at £20,120 and stop at £26,420, ready for the road.

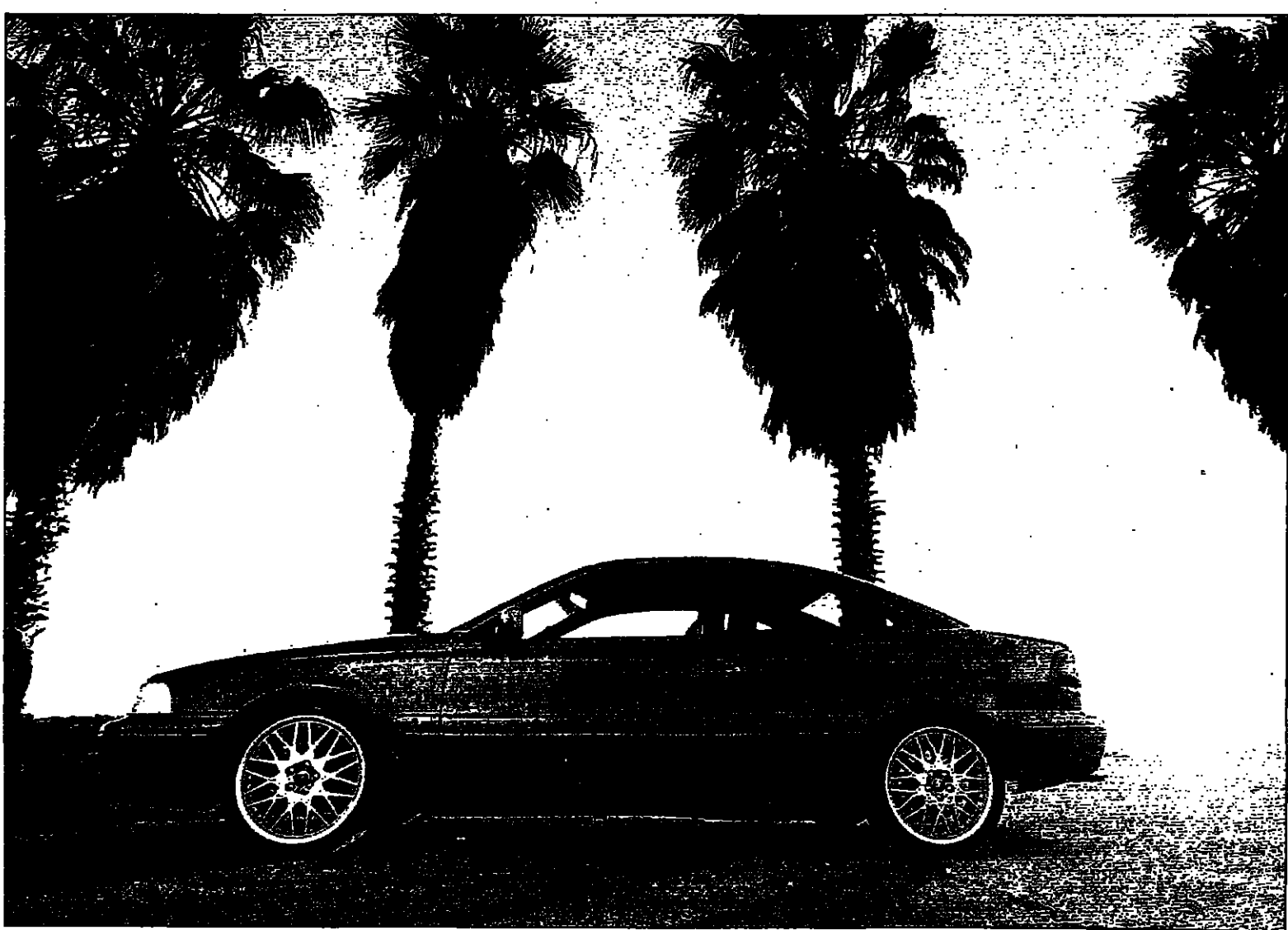
Chris Birch, purchasing manager of leasing company PPH Vehicle Management Services, reckons the 406 is ready to take on the mantle of the much-loved Vauxhall Calibra, which ceases production this summer. He only bought 400 coupés out of 22,000 cars last year but 250 were Calibras. Some company drivers like coupés just for posing, he says, but some buy them for safety reasons. "If you've got a young executive with kids they can't get out of the back of a coupé. There are no locks or doors to play with."

Coupés are all about looks and short self-lives. But if the European designers have rediscovered flair, the Japanese are generally held to have got the wind up. The last Honda Prelude had some intriguing curve lines but the new car

reverts to a rather boxy look. However, the benefits are more room for rear passengers and a bigger boot. Technology is still advanced, with Honda's V-Tec engine that loves to be revved. On-road prices are £18,795 for the 2.0i and £22,295 for the 2.2 VTI.

The only drivers who are not bowled over by the latest 20-valve bubble-eyed Fiat Coupé are those who bought the equally beautiful 1995 four-cylinder, two-litre car. Last year Fiat ditched that engine for a magnificent, burbling five-cylinder without or with turbo at £19,345 and £21,720 respectively on the road. It drips Italian style, with a strip of body-coloured metal running across the dash and brushed chrome petrol cap. If looks are open to debate, most drivers' hearts are melted by the Alfa Romeo GTV Coupé, a stunner with room for two plus toothbrush and Armani dinner jacket, £21,351 on the road.

The choice is still pretty exciting below £20,000, where coupés are taking over from hot hatchbacks as style statements. However, before you cast aside your worthy rep-mobile check whether your company will tolerate a two-door car. Plenty still put them on the banned list for insurance or image reasons. Running costs can also be high because fashion-led, mass-market coupés have frightening



Smooth operator: only 200 Volvo C70s, the model which features in *The Saint*, will be imported this year. The car goes on sale in September

depreciation. In the latest company car policy survey by remuneration advisers Monks Partnership, 70 per cent of large companies wouldn't have cabrios or two-door cars.

The sample was 165 big names like Argos and Midland Bank. "It used to be four-door saloons only, so that you could take clients around without them having to clamber into the back seat," says consultant

David Atkins. "But times are moving on, with people driving around on their own. However, image is still crucial. A two-door is fine at the senior end of the advertising industry but not in heavy engineering."

No coupé is a beast of burden but some are more versatile than others. Over a three-year contract you may well get very hacked off with a boot opening the size of a letter-box and

how will it fare on long-distance holidays? Most coupés have conventional and oddly shaped boots even though the rear seats may fold.

Enter the Hyundai Coupé, with hatchback and a lot to recommend it. Where Japan has lost its nerve this curvy Korean saloon has a full order book. At £15,599 and £16,999 all in, the two-litre pair offer sound quality, good looks and bags of

equipment. The only snag is a small dealer network.

The 1.6-litre Renault Megane Coupé starts at a reasonable £12,640 on the road and Vauxhall's smaller but more dramatic Tigra is £12,495 delivered. The success of both cars has prompted Ford into this market for the first time with the Fiesta-based 1.7-litre Puma, unveiled earlier this year, but on sale in July at around

£15,000, it should be a great drive. "It's a well-engineered car, not simply a styling exercise," said a spokesman, having a swipe at the Tigra, which is based on the less agile Corsa.

But even Ford can get it wrong in the fickle coupé market. The unloved Probe goes out of production in June after only three years but the rumoured replacement, the Cougar, is said to more than make up for it.

The classless Ford is a chic choice

John Blauth

The Ford Ka - pronounce it how you will, insiders favour Kay-A - is Ford's response to those who feel that, as a maker, it knows nothing of chic, of ideal design or of leading-edge automotive fashion.

Sales of the round-rumped car currently stand at around 7,000 per month and are rising as more and more buyers come to appreciate the cheeky style and the first-class dynamics.

The Ka is based on its Fiesta sibling but offers more interior room in a smaller package. Its engine is a sprightly 1.3-litre and fuel economy hovers around 45mpg mainly driving. Inside there is easily room for two big lugs (or four medium to small

ones) and the boot is ideal for the sort of urban trips the car excels at. The moulded composite fascia is startling and brilliantly designed.

Ka represents something truly new in the market: a car without pretensions, that is classless. It is the first of a new genre which will soon include the Mercedes/Smart car and the BMW/Rover-inspired new Mini.

Ford's initial plans were to sell 200,000 per year in continental Europe and 30,000 in Britain. In its first year the Ka will fall short of its targets, hit by the same public resistance that the Sierra suffered after it was first launched.

At prices that start below £8,000 though, the Ka is unlikely to languish long in the doldrums.



Fashion statement: the Ka is set to confound the sceptics

We can't get enough of Audi

Martin Derrick

Audi in Britain has a problem. Over the past three years its sales have increased by over 33 per cent with the result that the UK is now the German marque's largest export market bar none. Demand is so great that customers ordering the Golf-sized (and new Golf-based) Audi A3, introduced in October last year, are being told by dealers that they will have to wait until September for delivery.

And now Audi has launched the all-new A6 series to compete directly with the BMW 5-Series and Mercedes-Benz E-Class - and all the indications are that this will boost demand for the brand even further.

In one sense, this excess of demand over supply is the sort of problem that many motor

industry executives would give their right arms to have to put up with. But Len Hunt, Audi UK's managing director, is genuinely concerned that customers might be asked to wait too long. He is constantly badgering Audi in Germany to allocate more cars to the UK - but he knows that many of his counterparts in other markets where Audi is also doing well are sending exactly the same pleas to the factory at Ingolstadt.

What does not surprise him is that Audi is now the fastest-growing prestige marque in Britain. The brand got a huge boost, of course, when Princess Diana chose an Audi Cabriolet as her everyday transport. It has enjoyed a further boost from the new product ranges that have been launched in the recent past - from the all-aluminium, hi-tech A8, through the revised

A4 range, the new, smaller hatchback A3 range, and now the executive segment car, the A6.

"We laid down a five-year strategy three years ago to become a major player in the prestige car market with no less than 2 per cent of the total UK market," said Mr Hunt. "Last year we registered over 30,000 units, a record which took our market share to 1.5 per cent. This is a testament to the growing strength of the brand."

But the strategy is not purely performance-based. It also incorporates our continued development as a brand as a whole - as a prestige marque, rather than another range of cars sold by Volkswagen dealers."

Separate Audi Centres are now being developed: "The whole concept is to deliver a

unique experience. One which is enjoyable, hassle-free and mirrors the quality of our product," said Mr Hunt.

In addition, the brand is being repositioned to boost the appeal and desirability of Audi cars. In the near future, Audi plans to launch new sports and high-performance models to keep on building the excitement of the brand.

For now, the A6 is expected to account for around 7,500 sales a year once the Avant estate model joins the saloon early next year. That's fewer than BMW's 11,000 5-Series sales last year and Mercedes-Benz's 13,500 E-Class sales. But it's enough to make Audi Germany's third major player in the executive car market, which will make life interesting for Jaguar when it launches its mid-size car into the market next year.

الرياض 29 أبريل 1997

63.60, £2.00, £4.50, £2.20, DF: £38.90, CSP:
 £41.70, Traces: £264.38, Tnc: £79.10.
 4.30s: 1. MY BET (G Parker) 9-2; 2.
 Anneton Bay 10-30 (w/c 3; Dayneside 10-1
 7 ym. Hd, G. (M W Esterley, Sheriff Hutton).
 Traces: £4.30, £2.80, £1.60, DF: £4.70, CSP:
 £19.26, N/R: Frudin.
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 10-1, 13 ym. Hd, 19, (P Malon, Ogden
 Malony), Total: £4.80, £1.50, £1.80, £3
 DF: £5.30, CSP: £4.91, Tnc: £20.80.
 Pincapet: £335.30, Qeadpot: £138.84
 60s: £40.39, Place 5: £26.25.

Frentzen's driving force
Derick Allsop on the German's
maiden grand prix win, page 30

sport

Gallacher galore
Phil Shaw meets Scotland's
Mr Indestructible, page 30

Neville dispels Mancunian myth

GLENN MOORE
Football Correspondent

According to football legend, international weeks are preceded by an ancient Mancunian ritual. It supposedly involves the manager, these days Alex Ferguson, calling his international players into his office and gently reminding them about that hamstring pull or groin strain they had forgotten to mention when their country called.

The Welsh and Irish public who rarely see Ryan Giggs and Roy Keane in friendly may not be convinced but, said Gary Neville yesterday, this scenario is a myth.

Neville was at Bisham Abbey yesterday for an England training session, as he has been every time either Glenn Hoddle or Terry Venables have picked him. He was even there for England's last match, the friendly with Mexico, despite Hoddle and Ferguson agreeing that he had no chance of playing.

Neville, who is expected to win his 17th cap in England's World Cup tie against Georgia at Wembley tomorrow, said: "I've never even had a conversation with the manager about it. If I am selected, I just go. He wants us to play for England - the experience we can pick up stands us in good stead for United."

Some might suggest that Neville is less important to United than Giggs or Keane, but they would be confusing his lower profile with ability. Neville's maturity and dependable versatility mark him out as a future England captain and valuable current player.

Hoddle, who allowed the injured goalkeeper Ian Walker to return to Tottenham yesterday, said: "Gary is very mature and accomplished at a very young age. He has played in the European Championships and in big European matches for Manchester United and taken it all in his stride."

"He's doing it in the big games - as the skill he showed setting up United's third goal at Liverpool illustrated. If that had been Cantona, Zola or



Double act: Paul Ince and Robbie Fowler (left) turn their backs on the ebullient Jamie Redknapp and Steve McManaman at Bisham Abbey yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Juninho, then it would have been analysed over and over." Neville regards himself as less proficient going forward than his brother, Phil, but he has performed just as well for England at wing-back as he has at full-back and also as part of a back three.

Where he plays tomorrow night is uncertain. Hoddle admitted that in switching to a back four half-way through the Mexico game he was mistaken in putting all his faith in the German model of three central

defenders and wing-backs. Flexibility is required.

"I played in three different positions in Euro 96," Neville said. "With players who can adapt, it does not matter what the system is."

The *Tournoi de France* in June will be a chance for Hoddle to experiment and Neville pledged that, if selected, he would be there despite suggestions that United want to rest their players. "We're playing Brazil, Italy and France. I might never get the chance to play

Brazil again - it is not the sort of thing you turn down."

"I don't feel tired. Given the right fitness advice, as we get at United, you should always be in good shape to play. At 22 you just play, you don't think about it. We trust the manager to look after us, he will rest us if he thinks we are tired."

Neville also intimated that, whatever Ferguson decides to do about Eric Cantona, he will trust his judgement. Cantona has been heavily criticised in the wake of the European Cup

defeat by Borussia Dortmund, but Neville said he could not imagine him leaving. But he added, however, that if he did depart, United would continue to prosper.

Speaking for the young players, it would not cross our minds to think Eric will leave. He's the captain, other teams fear him. In every game you know the opposition manager has been telling his players how to combat him and other United players get freedom because of that. He is so influential. He has such

presence, very few players in the Premiership inspire the same feelings in opponents.

"I can't imagine him in a different shirt, as a fan or a teammate, but two or three years ago I could not imagine Paul Ince, Mark Hughes and Andrei Kanchelskis not wearing a United shirt. Since they have left we have progressed further in Europe, won the double and, I hope, a second title."

Ferguson will be at Wembley to watch Neville, David Beckham, and possibly, Gary Pallis-

ter, Phil Neville and Nicky Butt playing. Butt sat out training yesterday morning, as did Les Ferdinand, as a precaution after suffering minor niggles. They should be fit to play if required, as will Stuart Pearce, who fully extended his calf muscle injury for the first time.

With only Walker missing from the original 25-man party, England are, said Hoddle, in the strongest position since I've been manager. No excuses, then, not that there should be any need for them.

Cronje puts Ireland in control

Cricket
ADAM SZRETER

The South African captain Hansie Cronje made an unbeaten 94 for Ireland, who had Middlesex in serious trouble when rain ended play early in their Benson and Hedges Cup zonal match in Dublin yesterday.

Middlesex were 134 for 6 off 32.2 overs, now needing to score at 8.38 per over in reply to 281 for 4 by Ireland, who last month narrowly missed out on a place in the next World Cup after finishing fourth in the ICC Trophy.

Leicestershire posted a record for the 50-over version of the cup as they eased to a 178-run victory over Scotland at Grace Road. They made 371 for 6 to beat Warwickshire's 369 for 8, made last season when the tournament switched from 55 overs.

Opener Darren Maddy made 97 off 98 balls, and there were half-centuries from Iain Sturges, James Whitaker and Aftab Habib. Scotland were below full strength with eight of the squad which finished third in the ICC Trophy unavailable.

Paul Jarvis hit a rapid unbeaten 42 and then took 3 for 30 as Sussex's bright start to the season continued at Hove, where they beat Hampshire by 49 runs. Despite 65 from John Stephenson Hampshire were never in contention after being set 233.

Kent scrambled to a four-wicket win off the last ball against Surrey at The Oval. Needing two to win, Mark Ealham hit Ben Hollis for a straight six. Matthew Flenley's 5 for 54 for Kent gave him the Gold Award, and there were half-centuries for Kent's Matthew Walker and Surrey's Alec Stewart.

At Bristol, British Universities went down by 122 runs against Gloucestershire, whose spinner Martyn Ball took 4 for 22. The Tasmanian Shaun Young hit 52 at a run a ball for the Gold Award, while for the students Robin Martin-Jenkins finished with 4 for 57 and wicketkeeper Tim Bailey made 52.

At Trent Bridge Durham are within sight of their first win over a first-class side since 28 July last year thanks to David Boon's third half-century in four innings. When rain stopped play Nottinghamshire were 94 for 3 from 26 overs, needing 232 to win.

Only 10.5 overs were possible in the Roses match at Old Trafford, with Yorkshire 43 without loss, and at Lakenham Chris Adams was unbeaten on 95 as Derbyshire reached 166 for 2 chasing the Minor Counties' 257. The former Derbyshire player Mark Fell made 67 and Richard Dalton 76 off 59 balls. Reports, scoreboard, page 31

Dalglish tempts Tomasson to Tyneside

ALAN NIXON

Kenny Dalglish has made Jon Dahl Tomasson his third major signing for Newcastle United in a £2.5m move that will take the Dane from the Dutch Cup finalists, Heerenveen, to Tyneside in the summer.

The attacking midfielder is one of the top scorers in the Netherlands this season, and even before his arrival at Newcastle he is being touted as a long-term replacement for Peter Beardsley. Tomasson is signing a deal worth an estimated

£30,000 a week, making him the biggest of Dalglish's three signings so far after Bradford City's Des Hamilton and the Georgian, Temur Ketsbaia.

Blackburn, Dalglish's previous club, were also endeavouring to strengthen their squad yesterday by making a £2m bid for the French international right-back Patrick Blondeau.

The Rovers chairman, Robert Carr, tabled an offer at the weekend to Monaco for the defender after Roy Hodgson, who will move to Ewood Park in the summer, told him to make the approach. Blondeau impressed

Hodgson in the two games against his Internazionale side in the UEFA Cup semi-final. Blackburn are competing with both Sheffield Wednesday and Rangers for the Frenchman's signature.

The Football League has refused a request from the satellite broadcaster, Sky Sports, to switch Hereford United's crucial Third Division survival match with Brighton at Edgar Street from Saturday to Sunday in order to screen the game live.

Chris Hull, a League spokesman, said: "Sky asked the League to move the game for-

ward to Sunday but, after consulting both clubs and the local police, we felt the game should remain on Saturday."

The Torquay United chairman Mike Bateson said he is disillusioned with the "apathy and antipathy" in professional football and intends standing down at the end of the season. Bateson has been in charge at Plainmoor for seven seasons, investing £1.3m in the Third Division club.

Bateson said: "After the trials and tribulations of the last few years, it is becoming increasingly difficult for me to conjure up the

enthusiasm and optimism which is a prerequisite of running a football club. I have had my ups and downs but I'm increasingly tired of the apathy and antipathy in the professional game."

"I'd like to stress, however, that the people who have had a go at me over the years would not push me one inch towards resigning if I did not feel I've had enough." Bateson intends to sell his 82 per cent majority shareholding in the club. His wife, a fellow director, will also sell her shares.

Leeds United's chief executive quits, page 21

Orient boot out Shilton

Peter Shilton's League career appears to be over. His contract with Leyton Orient has been terminated because the former England goalkeeper, who is the only player with 1,000 League games under his belt, can no longer belt the ball far enough.

The 47-year-old played only 10 times for the Third Division side, including his landmark 1,000th, after joining them from West Ham last November.

Orient's manager, Tommy Taylor, said: "Peter is magnificent for his age and if he could kick the ball I would keep him. It sounds silly but you need a goalkeeper to kick it into your

opponent's penalty box to make chances in this division."

Orient's chief scout, Steve Shorey, added: "I wouldn't like to say anything against a player who has served the game so well... other clubs might be interested in him."

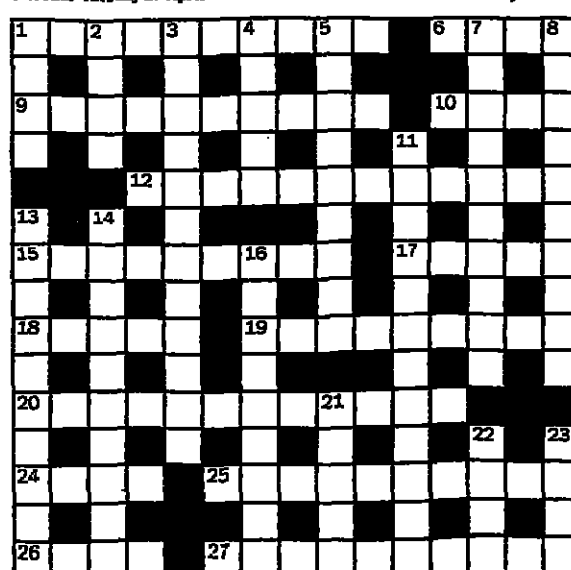
He pointed out that Shilton, who is to play several games in Hong Kong, was Orient's first choice until he was injured and the club signed Paul Hyde, who has taken over the No 1 jersey.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3283 Thursday 29 April

By Aedon

Monday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Is inquisitive however the French feature in old house? (6,4)
6 Catty report gives me audible expression of pain (4)
9 In time for geologist to curse trips interrupted by expert (10)
10 Mark holiday resort borough ignored (4)
12 Might such lines be bound to meet without precedent? (12)
15 Protected species? (9)
17 One finding power in honey, and drive (5)
18 English man said to have modern communication (1,4)
19 Spells controlling awfully cosy organisation (4,5)

DOWN
1 Speed and power expert (4)
2 Animal found in Gb. exceptionally (4)
3 Rose window, say, detains awfully good girl (7,5)
4 One with inclination to be observed in a laugh? (5)
5 Return of a two-faced politician is praiseworthy? (9)

7 Use clay put in order to represent tree (10)
8 Best type of universal instruction (5,5)
11 Comprehensive in culls designed to be limited to living (3,9)
13 Taps were fitted to control one's pressure in these? (5,5)
14 One's mate Calum surprisingly is not spotted (10)
16 Sign proceeded to maintain one's a bookish type (9)
21 Live to deceive and give a false impression (5)
22 Fusses over chemical (4)
23 Rum bit of land in the main? (4)

Question of confidence for battling Parrott

Snooker

GUY HODGSON
reports from the Crucible, Sheffield

What happened next? John Parrott is more familiar as a permanent feature on *Question of Sport* these days, but while that normally suggests retirement has either been reached or is impending, he obviously plans something more vigorous.

Parrott, 36, reached his ninth quarter-final in 14 Embassy World Championships yesterday when he defeated Anthony Hamilton 13-11 and while that might not sound like a overwhelming margin, he began making comparisons with his 1991 title victory.

"No one is talking about me as a potential winner," he said, "and in that I'm in a similar position to when I won here. I had a poor season then and this year, although I got to the final of the European Open, my results have been mixed."

"I still haven't got my safety together. I find the tables very quick, but I believe I'm still a good match player. I'm very hard to beat." Did he feel good? "If I got any happier I'd be walking around looking like Bonnie Langford," he replied.

The smile on the fourth seed's face frequently looked strained, however, during a match which he described as "bizarre". He began by scoring only nine points in the first four frames and forfeited the 11th when he was called for three

successive misses when the cue ball rolled away from a red.

"Whoever put the spirit level on that table must be from the Mary Feldman school," he said. "There was no way the table was straight. I've never seen a roll like that before."

Away from these deviations from the straight and narrow, the quality of the snooker was often very high. Hamilton has reached the last 16 in ranking tournaments nine times and failed to get any further, yet he had three century breaks in this match and refused to let Parrott run away when the former champion appeared to be heading for a commanding lead.

At 11-11, Parrott found his best form, knocking in a 133 in the penultimate frame and then trapping Hamilton in a web of snookers in the last. "I've got a bit of experience on my side," he said. "I need something against these young lads."

In between his first- and second-round matches, Parrott filmed two *Question of Sport* programmes for the BBC but he does not see it as a distraction. "If anything it's a bonus," he said. "It's a good way to relax. I wouldn't let anything interfere with my snooker. It's foremost in my mind."

Snooker has always been high up in Steve Davis's list of priorities, but sometimes you cannot win no matter how you are playing. He used to inflict horrible defeats on opponents who did little wrong but could not cope with the weight of the scores he would post against

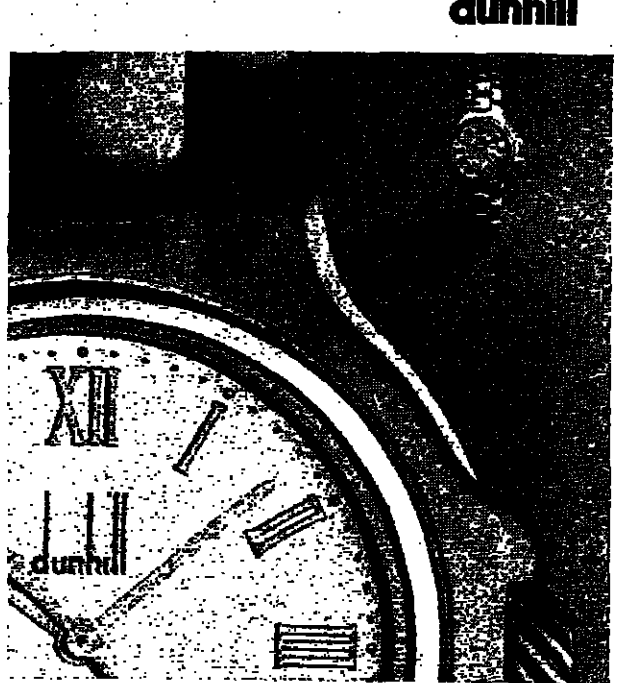
them. On Sunday night, the biter was well and truly bit, his worst world championship defeat since Tony Knowles beat him 10-11 15 years ago.

Davis was, by his own admission, annihilated 13-3 by Ken Doherty. "It was very therapeutic watching it all drift away," the six-times champion said. "It was an interesting experience to say the least. When you have been beaten a session early and by such a comprehensive margin, the pain of defeat is deadened to the point of jocularly."

"No matter what I did it wouldn't work," he continued. "I tried to take the foot off the pedal and still it made no difference. By the end, I adopted the 'couldn't care less' philosophy. At one stage I'm sure I was playing with the wrong cue, by the end I'm sure it was the wrong arm."

Doherty, by his own manager Ian Doyle's admission, is an under-achiever in snooker. He has won one ranking tournament, but so much more was expected when he made his debut at the Crucible in 1991 at the age of 21. Against Davis, he displayed what people had predicted six years ago: relentless potting.

Was that the best he had played recently, he was asked. "Never mind this season, I haven't played like that for a couple of seasons. Every time I got in I seemed to score heavily. Steve has given me a few beatings in the past and I was happy to return the favour." Results, Digest, page 31



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